

Hafa Adai!

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OPINION METER

This week's poll:
Do you support the SEDC proposal to eliminate all poker machines in the CNMI, except those at licensed casinos, by June 30, 2009?

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to cast your vote.

91 without a
government
budget for
FY 2009
DAYS

INSIDE

New Rallies

Thousands of supporters of exiled former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra surrounded Thailand's Parliament on Monday.

ASIA...Page 16



Comedy Shows

It proved to be more than a joke when David Letterman said that "the road to the White House runs through me."

LIFE & STYLE...Page 19

Fewer families are availing of Early Intervention. **PAGE 2**

Police identifies electrocution victim. **PAGE 3**

'47K Japanese visitors in the Marianas at yearend'

By AGNES E. DONATO
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REPORTER

Saipan and Guam will receive 47,000 Japanese visitors during the 12-day yearend season beginning Dec. 23, according to a top travel management agency based in Japan.

The projection for the Marianas represents 8.1 percent of the 580,000 Japanese expected to take trips with at least one night away from home between Dec. 23, 2008, and Jan. 3, 2009.

The forecast by JTB Corp. is the same as the number of Japanese who traveled to the Marianas during the same period last year.

JTB Corp. did not provide separate figures for Saipan and Guam.

The survey was conducted in 200 lo-
See 47K on Page 4

Male tourist drowns at Micro Beach

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

A tourist drowned while swimming with his daughter at Micro Beach in Garapan last week, according to the Department of Public Safety yesterday.

DPS spokesperson Lei Ogumoro said Takeyuki Wakasa, 59, a Japanese, was pronounced dead by a doctor at the Commonwealth Health Center on Tuesday, Dec. 23, at 3:21pm.

Ogumoro said Wakasa, who had a history of chest pain and shortness of breathing, was found with fluid in his lungs.

Ogumoro said that DPS received a report of a possible drowning incident at Micro Beach Tuesday last week at

See MALE on Page 4



Pushkar Shah of Nepal visits Saipan with his bicycle. Inset shows Saipan Mayor Juan B. Tudela presenting Shah with a certificate of appreciation for making Saipan his 139th stop in his world tour for peace during a courtesy call yesterday.
NAZARIO RODRIGUEZ JR.

Cyclist for peace makes Saipan his 139th stop

By NAZARIO RODRIGUEZ JR.
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REPORTER

A man from Nepal who has been touring the world using a donated bicycle is currently on Saipan to promote his personal journey for peace on earth.

Pushkar Shah made a courtesy call on Mayor Juan B. Tudela yesterday, saying he is making Saipan his 139th stop in his odyssey on wheels.

The 40-year old graduate of education said he has been

doing this since 1998.

He previously visited 138 countries in six continents, including the remotest places and the most dangerous jungles in Africa.

He just came from the Philippines, Palau, and Guam before flying to Saipan. He will fly back to the Philippines on Friday.

Shah said he doesn't need any money for this but accepts whatever kindhearted people would offer.

See CYCLIST on Page 4



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PREPAID DEAL

CONNECT

See stores for details.

Local

Fewer families are availing of Early Intervention

By KRISTI EATON
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REPORTER

Official numbers from the CNMI's Early Intervention Services program show a decrease in the number of babies treated for 2008, particularly among those under age 1.

A total of 50 babies were referred to the program for 2008, down from 58 the year before. For babies under age 1, the number decreased by 60 per-

cent from 10 babies in 2007 to 4 in 2008, according to Suzanne Lizama, coordinator for the Public School System's Early Childhood Special Education.

"We took a dive," she said. The Early Intervention Services program helps families diagnose and treat children from birth to 3 years old who might be experiencing developmental delays.

Lizama said she is working with other local organizations to brainstorm how she can get

the word out about the program. Some ideas are to conduct orientations for new food stamp recipients and present ads on radio and TV. In the past the program has used posters to try to get the word out, but Lizama said this is not always ideal.

"In all my years of experience,

I don't think posters or brochures bring people in. It's word of mouth," she had earlier said.

The best time for referrals is after a baby's initial developmental check by a doctor or nurse, she said, adding that now she is noticing that parents are bringing in their children at age

2 for referrals.

"I often wonder why this wasn't caught earlier," she said of babies experiencing delays.

There are several milestones that babies should be meeting and, if they aren't, parents should seek assistance. For example, she said, 1 year old ba-

bies should be starting to stand up and taking steps. And around 1.5 years, babies should be putting words together.

Families interested in the services can visit the Child Development Assistance Center. All test are conducted in the baby's natural environment, she said.

Police schedules three sobriety checkpoints on Dec. 31, Jan. 1

By NAZARIO RODRIGUEZ JR.
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REPORTER

The Department of Public Safety Traffic Section announced yesterday that it would be putting up three sobriety checkpoints in designated areas on New Year's Eve.

Police would be setting up the first checkpoint in front of the Multi-Purpose Building along Beach Road in Susupe from 7:30pm to 8:45pm for northbound motorists.

The second setup would be also along Beach Road in Chalan Lau Lau located in front of the intersection of B&R Auto Shop but this time for southbound motorists. The checkpoint would be from 10:30pm to 11:45pm.

The third checkpoint would be along 2W Highway in Chalan Laulau in front of PTI (southbound outer lane). This will start at about 3am and will

end at 4:15am.

Each checkpoint would last at least one hour and 15 minutes.

DPS said this is part of the 3D program, which attempts to deter and detect impaired driving and to ensure that all vehicle occupants are protected.

Traffic officers would also be conducting highway criminal interdictions, saturation patrols, aggressive driver interdictions, and laser activities.

For more information, contact Sgt. Paul Ogumoro or Officer Eric David at 664-9084-5 or fax 664-9086.

DPS also conducted a sobriety checkpoint during Christmas Eve. There is no available report yet of the results of the sobriety check.

Ogumoro said, however, that it was generally peaceful during the holidays.

He said the motorists seem to be observing traffic rules and regulations.



FAM TOUR

Travel and media representatives of last week's Osaka-Saipan familiarization tour in the Northern Mariana Islands pose for a commemorative photo at Fiesta Resort & Spa before their departure on Dec. 24. The tour group was on Saipan from Dec. 22-24, 2008, to learn more about the islands in order to support the new Osaka-Saipan flight by Asiana Airlines started last Saturday, Dec. 20, and to help develop honeymoon products. MARIANAS VISITORS AUTHORITY

Authorities arrest man in theft of over 100 boxes of Polo shirts

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

Agents of the Attorney General's Investigation Unit arrested over the weekend a man who, together with others, allegedly stole over 100 boxes of Polo shirts from the L&T International warehouse compound in Lower Base in May.

De Zhu Sun, 30, was arrested for allegedly receiving stolen property. He was taken to the Superior Court yesterday for a bail hearing.

Associate Judge David A. Wiseman allowed Sun to post a \$2,500 cash bail and \$22,500 in unsecured bond.

The arraignment was set for Jan. 12 at 9am.

Investigation is still ongoing with respect to the other suspects, *Saipan Tribune* learned.

AGIU investigator Erwin T. Flores stated in his report that on May 25, 2008, the Depart-

ment of Public Safety received a complaint about the theft of numerous boxes of Polo shirts from the second floor of a warehouse in the L&T International compound.

Flores said that, according to the information, a blue van with license plate AGC 583 was seen leaving the compound on the day of the burglary.

Flores said that on Dec. 5, 2008, acting on information from a "confidential source," police officers arrested Sun and three other persons who had just delivered boxes of Polo shirts at the Rainbow Auto Shop in Chalan Laolao.

Police questioned the four about the shirts then released them for further investigation.

DPS impounded 94 boxes of Polo shirts. Sun claimed he had a receipt for the shirts and that he was the items' legitimate owner.

Flores said an agent from the

Federal Bureau of Investigation who assisted in the investigation told him that the boxes seized by DPS were taken to a private warehouse in As Lito. The warehouse is under the control of the police's "confidential source."

Flores said he, the FBI agent, and another AGIU investigator took an employee of L&T to the As Lito warehouse to check the shirts.

Flores said the L&T employee identified the boxes as the items that were stolen from the L&T warehouse.

After the positive identification, the investigator said they seized the 94 boxes of Polo shirts and transferred them to a secured area at the CTSI Terminal in Lower Base.

Flores said that when he interviewed Sun, the suspect showed four receipts for the Polo shirts.

Flores said an L&T account-

tant, however, confirmed that the four receipts were fraudulent because they don't have an authorized signature and are of different forms.

The accountant said the company would not allow such a large sale to occur since that would be a breach of the contract with Polo Ralph Lauren to sell that many pieces to another buyer.

Flores said that during a second interview with Sun on Dec. 22, the suspect admitted he was aware that the shirts were stolen.

Sun pointed to a former employee of Trans Asia Garment Manufacturing as the one who stole the boxes of shirts using a blue van.

Sun also showed to Flores at his residence 50 boxes that appeared to be identical to the 94 boxes that were recovered from the warehouse in As Lito.

Sun told the investigator that the boxes contained the same Polo shirts worth \$50,000.

AGIU agents searched Sun's residence last Friday and seized the boxes of shirts.

Commonwealth Government Employees' Credit Union

PO Box 500135, Saipan MP 96950

Frances A. Castro
Chairwoman

Jose I. Sablan
General Manager

PUBLIC NOTICE

Pursuant to the Open Government Act, Governor Benigno R. Fitial and Lt. Governor Timothy P. Villagomez through the Commonwealth Government Employees' Credit Union Board of Directors (BOARD) hereby gives notice that the BOARD has rescheduled its Tuesday, December 23, 2008 meeting to Friday, January 2, 2009, at 2:00 pm at the Credit Union Office in Capitol Hill, Saipan. The following agenda will be discussed:

I. ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

- A. Call to Order
- B. Roll Call
- Adoption of Agenda
- Adoption of Minutes
- June 26, 2008

II. GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

- Collection Status
- Financial Report-Monthly
- Operational Matters

III. OLD BUSINESS-NONE

IV. NEW BUSINESS

- 2009 Budget

V. MISCELLANEOUS

VI. ADJOURNMENT

/s/ Frances A. Castro
Chairperson

NEWS BRIEFS

RP resets overseas absentee voters registration/certification

The Philippine Consulate General would like to inform all the Filipinos in the CNMI that as per Resolution No. 8556, the Philippine Commission on Elections has reset the registration/certification of overseas absentee voters from Dec. 1, 2008 to Feb. 1, 2009, ending on Aug. 31, 2009. All qualified Filipino voters are urged to register as overseas voters or to update their records (if they have previously voted in the Philippines) to enable them to vote during the 2010 Philippine presidential elections. (PR)

Vendors sought for Puengin Inetnon

The Kagman Komunidat Association is looking for interested vendors to sell food, clothing, games, and other types of family oriented entertainment for "Puengin Inetnon."

"Puengin Inetnon" is Chamorro for "a night of gathering."

It will be similar to the Thursday Night Street Market in Gapan except that it will be held every government payday Friday at the Kagman Community Center. Interested vendors, volunteers, and performers may call the Kagman Post Office at 256-POST for more info. (PR)

Electrocution victim identified

By NAZARIO RODRIGUEZ JR.
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REPORTER

The Department of Public Safety yesterday released the name of the man who was electrocuted while picking breadfruit using a metal pipe that came into contact with a power line in Chalan Kanoa Friday noon.

DPS public information officer Lei Ogumoro identified the victim as 33-year-old Mel Hal B. Ogarto Taitano.

According to the DPS report, police received a call of a person who got electrocuted at a residence just across Glory Market at the corner of Dolores St. and Chalan Kanoa Drive around 12:15pm on Dec. 26, 2008.

Initial police investigation said the victim, after asking permission from the tree owner, climbed up the breadfruit tree inside the private resi-

dence and used a metal pipe to pick the edible fruit. Unfortunately, the pipe accidentally touched the live wire, causing his instant death.

The police report said the power line ran through the breadfruit tree.

Witnesses said it took about an hour for rescuers to get the man's body down from the tree. He was then immediately transported to the hospital.

In a routine check yesterday at the place of the incident, the 50-foot tree had already been cut down.

According to the police, a male witness, who was on the ground at the time the victim was electrocuted, immediately climbed up the tree to help bring the victim down.

DPS said police authorities arrived at the scene and quickly advised the witness not to attempt to bring the victim down

as both he and the victim risk falling from the tree.

Police also observed black smoke coming from the top of the tree.

DPS said that medics, a ladder truck, and the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. were quickly summoned to the scene. A CUC lineman was able to climb up the power pole and disable the power line.

Also present during the rescue were members of the Fire Division rescue units, who brought down the body.

The victim was then transported to the Commonwealth Health Center where he was pronounced dead upon arrival at 1:08pm by Dr. Macris.

Police investigators found a six-foot metal pipe with metal hooks on one end lying on the roadway at the accident scene. Police said they found black burn marks on the pipe.

DPH seeks funds for tobacco, diabetes programs

By KRISTI EATON
kristi_eaton@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Department of Public Health yesterday submitted a grant proposal to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, seeking funding for tobacco and diabetes programs for the next five years.

It's important DPH obtain federal funding because there is no local resources for the program, said former deputy secretary for Public Health Lynn Tenorio,

who volunteered to prepare the grant application.

Tenorio said this is the first year the CDC has asked for a joint application for both the tobacco and diabetes programs. The CNMI has one of the highest rates of diabetes in the world.

"It is an attempt to 'integrate' efforts as we address non-communicable diseases (NCD)," she said in an e-mail. "It is an attempt to coordinate activities as we address lifestyle related NCDs."

As resources for such programs continue to dwindle in the United States, she said it's important to share resources through common projects and activities in order to be effective and efficient.

The CDC should notify DPH about the grant in late January to mid-February.

Tenorio has extensive experience with federal grants. As deputy secretary, she helped DPH double federal funding to \$6 million.



TECHNICIAN CERTIFICATE

Ramon Garrido Villagomez II, son of the late Justice Ramon Villagomez and Angie Chong Villagomez, received his Harley-Davidson and Yamaha Certified Technician Program Certificate on Dec. 12, 2008 at the Motorcycle Mechanics Institute/UTI in Phoenix, Arizona.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Regs out on claiming disability pension

The NMI Retirement Fund is proposing rules to streamline the process of claiming disability pension benefits.

The proposed regulations, which appear on the latest issue of the Commonwealth Register, implement a recently enacted law on disability retirement.

Under the new law, a person who wants to claim disability retirement benefits need no longer be evaluated by a vocational rehabilitation counselor. But the law includes a requirement of

evaluation by two physicians, one of whom is a specialist in the area of the disability being evaluated.

The public has until Jan. 21, 2009, to comment on the proposed regulations. Comments should be sent to Mark Aguon, administrator of the Retirement Fund.

Proponents of the measure say the previous requirements were too difficult to meet, as counselors at the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation lack medical and psychiatric expertise or creden-

tials to issue disability certifications. This situation, they add, has created a hardship for OVR, for the retirees, and for the Retirement Fund.

In signing the law, Gov. Benigno R. Fitial said, "Although I believe the inclusion of a vocational rehabilitation counselor is still necessary and more fool-proof than excluding one, the requirement of a specialized physician is sufficient to deter excessive abuse by claimants." (Agnes E. Donato)

HAPPY HOLIDAYS NEW YEAR SPECIALS

from Palms Resort Saipan

New Year's Eve December 31, 2008

New Year's Eve Dinner Buffet at fresko

6:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

\$25.00 Adult / \$15.00 Child * Local discount 20% applicable
* San Roque Club & Buddy Card Welcome

New Year's Special Teppan-yaki Dinner Course at Kaenju

6:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

\$120.00 per person * Local discount 20% applicable
* San Roque Club & Buddy Card Welcome

COUNTDOWN PARTY 2008 - 2009

More than **20** mins.
Fireworks!!

New Year Countdown Party at Sunset Patio

December 31, 2008 10:00 p.m. - 12:30 a.m.

\$15.00 Adult / \$10.00 Child

- Bottomless Champagne and Soft Drinks
- Live Entertainment
- Raffle Drawing

Year End Special at PauPau Bar

December 31, 2008 10:30 p.m. - 12:30 a.m.

\$30.00 per person

Featuring Bottomless Wine and Champagne with Cocktail Food

New Year's Day January 1, 2009

New Year's Day Brunch at fresko

11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

\$25.00 Adult / \$15.00 Child * Local discount 20% applicable
* San Roque Club & Buddy Card Welcome

New Year's Day Course Dinner at fresko

6:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

\$30.00 Adult / \$15.00 Child * Local discount 20% applicable
* San Roque Club & Buddy Card Welcome

New Year's Special Teppan-yaki Dinner Course at Kaenju

6:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

\$120.00 per person * Local discount 20% applicable
* San Roque Club & Buddy Card Welcome

For reservation or more information, please call 322-3311

Palms Resort Saipan

PNG braces for predicted 'king tides'

Coastal residents advised to take precautions

PORT MORESBY, Papua New Guinea (PNG Post-Courier/PIR)—Spring tides or king tides are expected to occur throughout the country towards the end of this month and early next month.

The Director of the National Disaster Centre (NDS) Martin Mose said according to the National Weather Service's (NWS) warning issued yesterday, the spring tides are expected to occur throughout Papua New Guinea's coastal waters.

Mose said this is expected to occur

from January 7 to 14 and urged communities along the coastal areas to take extra precautions during this period.

He said the people living along the coastlines should identify and high er ground and safest routes to the higher grounds when the high tides are experienced.

"Make it a habit to listen to radio or watch the television for any warnings that may be issued by authorities such as the NDS Office," Mose said.

He said if the warning is issued, people must move inland or to higher

grounds immediately, adding young men and women must have the courage to help children, older people and the disabled to move with them.

He also warned people to stay away from beaches until authorities had declared them safe. Mose said learning from all the disasters that occur, people must take with them an emergency kit which should include spare clothes, canned or fried food, water, water containers, candles, a torch with spare batteries, matches or lighter and a lamp with kerosene.

"Although the authorities will con-

tinue to discharge current updates on the spring tides and king tides occurrence, communities must also take up

the responsibility to confirm before taking the necessary steps to evacuate to safer areas," Mose said.

PACIFIC BRIEFS

American Samoa to expand water system

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (RNZI/PIR)—The American Samoa Power Authority has been awarded a grant of \$1.43 million by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to connect the outlying villages of Fagali'i, Malota, and Fagamalo to the public water system. The project will enable ASPA to supply potable water to the western most villages, which have not yet met standards of the Agency's Safe Drinking Water Act. With the completion of this federally-funded project, all of Tutuila will be served with potable water supplied by ASPA. Until now the western most villages are served by village water systems which are not chlorinated.

Tanis elected president of Bougainville

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (RNZI/PIR)—James Tanis has been elected President of the autonomous Papua New Guinea province of Bougainville. The former separatist beat 13 other contenders for the post made vacant by the death of Joseph Kabui in June this year. The Post Courier newspaper reports he was nearly two thousand votes ahead of the second highest polling candidate, former National Government Cabinet Minister, Sam Akoitai. Tanis finished third in the first election for President for 2005, behind Kabui and former Governor John Momis.

Fiji expels Australian defense minister

SUVA, Fiji (Fijilive/PIR)—Australia's Government has branded as unhelpful and destructive a decision by Fiji's in-

terim Government to expel Canberra's South Pacific Defense Adviser. The unnamed official had been in Suva on a visitor visa awaiting a decision by the interim Government on his long-term visa status. Australian Defense Minister Joel Fitzgibbon told The Australian newspaper: "The interim (Fiji) Government has indicated that no visa will be granted. This is unhelpful and destructive behavior by the Fiji interim Government, which should instead be focusing all of its efforts on returning Fiji to democracy - as it had promised to do."

Two Fiji doctors fined for death of boy

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (RNZI/PIR)—Fiji's Public Service Commission has fined the two doctors involved in the case of a five-year-old boy who died after surgery on a fractured arm. Shavneet Kumar was five when he died last September. The doctors who have been fined are Luke Nasendra and Teresa Lum. The Fiji Times says the Health Ministry's permanent secretary Dr Lepani Waqatakirewa, said the inquiry found some weakness in the handling and management of the case. Dr Waqatakirewa says the doctors could appeal against the fine.

China, PNG sign \$2.9M agreement

PORT MORESBY, Papua New Guinea (The National/PIR)—China and Papua New Guinea yesterday signed two banking agreements covering K7.5 million [US\$2.9 million] in separate grant aid that was agreed between the two governments last year and this year. Also yesterday,

Chinese Ambassador Wei Ruixing handed over the Kandep Agriculture College project in Enga, which was funded by the Chinese government, to the PNG Government. The signing took place at Vulupindi Haus in Waigani between the secretary of the Department of National Planning Joseph Lelang and Mr Wei. Lelang said that the two agreements were for two separate grant aid already agreed and signed by the governments of PNG and China on March 30 last year for 4.3 million yuan [US\$629,000] and for 10 million yuan [US\$1.4 million] last Sept 6.

New Zealand mulls high commissioner in Fiji

SUVA, Fiji (Fiji Times/PIR)—The New Zealand Government has revealed the expulsion of acting High Commissioner Caroline McDonald has made them review its position here. Speaking to the media in New Zealand, Foreign Affairs Minister Murray McCully said there would not be any immediate moves to appoint a new commissioner because of the current environment in Fiji. "This time around we would have to think quite carefully about why we would want to send somebody into an environment where, on the current track record, there's a high chance of them simply being sent home again," Murray said. "After the Pacific Leaders' Forum meeting on January 27, we will get a feel for whether things are going to improve or not and that will give us some guidance as to how we should see the way forward." It is the third time in New Zealand's history that a diplomat has been expelled from their station and the second involving Fiji.

CYCLIST

From Page 1

All his travel expenses, including food, airline tickets, clothing and even his bicycle are all donated by Good Samaritans.

Shah, whose father was killed by terrorists, said he decided to devote his time to this personal journey as a way of calling an end to terrorism, war and fighting around the world.

Mayor Tudela honored him with a plaque of appreciation.

"I cannot imagine how you would be able to find us in the map as our island appears so tiny compared to other places in the world," Tudela told Shah.

Tudela said the people of Saipan

"commend you for the courage, effort and patience to travel for the last 11 years in an attempt to set foot and to be on your bike as part of a record-breaking attempt in all the 138 countries, and Saipan," Tudela said.

The mayor hopes that, with Shah's visit to the island, many local cyclists will be inspired to do the same "as you already did throughout the 11 years of traveling to prove that nothing is hard to accomplish when it is something that you really desire."

Shah is currently living with a couple who are members of the Saipan Cyclers.

The association is also committed to donating money to pay for his plane ticket back to the Philippines.

Shah told some of the many danger-

ous and funny things that he experienced throughout his 11-year odyssey on wheels. For instance, he was kidnapped in Mexico in 2002 by bandits. He was also held up at gunpoint along a street.

His current bicycle is now his third. The first one was broken in Hong Kong, the second one was stolen in New Zealand.

In New Zealand, he met the famous Mt. Everest conqueror, Sir Edmund Hillary, who donated the bicycle he is now presently using.

Shah said the most peaceful places on earth he ever visited were the countries in Europe.

Shah said the most dangerous places on Earth are in war torn countries like Congo, Sierra Leone, East Timor and Liberia.



PUBLIC NUISANCE

FERDIE DE LA TORRE

Even the Joeten-Kiyu Public Library in Susupe has fallen victim to a person who spray-painted the building with the word "xenocide." Many newly repainted bus stops have been spray-painted with "xenocide" since last October. As of yesterday, the vandal has yet to be arrested. Police and observers believe that there is only one person responsible for the vandalism as the writing style is noticeably similar. Call Crime Stoppers at 234-7272 if you know the person behind this.

MALE

From Page 1

2:56pm.

According to the preliminary investigation, Wakasa was swimming with his 13-year-old daughter when he decided to go further toward the deeper part of the ocean. The daughter remained near the shoreline.

About 30 minutes to an hour later, Wakasa was found motionless and face

down on the surface of the water, a quarter mile from the beach.

The victim was placed aboard a commercial boat. He had no pulse and was not breathing. Ogomoro said cardiopulmonary resuscitation was administered on the victim.

Medics then transported the victim to CHC for further treatment, but he was later pronounced dead.

Last Nov. 22, a fishing boat crew member reportedly drowned when he fell into the ocean near the island of Guguan.

47K

From Page 1

cations throughout Japan from Nov. 5 through Nov. 17, 2008. Some 1,200 people were interviewed individually regarding their travel plans during the New Year season.

According to JTB's news release, destinations such as Korea, Taiwan and Europe get help from the rising value of the yen against the currencies in those places. Year-end departures for Europe are also popular because of the timing of the holidays. Travelers can enjoy a nine-day holiday sequence by leaving on Dec. 27 and taking Dec. 29 and 30 off.

"One influence of the financial crisis

stemming from the U.S. sub-prime loan problem has been to reduce year-end bonuses for the first time in six years," JTB said. "While this is exerting unusually strong negative financial and psychological influences on year-end/New Year travel, a nine-day holiday sequence has undeniable attractions for those who find it difficult to take so much time off at any other season."

JTB said travel to close destinations such as Korea, Taiwan and the Marianas will peak from Dec. 26 through Dec. 31. Most travelers bound for Europe will leave Japan from Dec. 26 through Dec. 28. For medium-distance destinations such as Hawaii and Asian beach resorts, the peak will be from Dec. 26 through Dec. 29.

Visitor industry sees acute decline in the last decade

By KRISTI EATON
Kristi_eaton@saipantribune.com
REPORTS

Visitor arrivals to the Commonwealth have dropped by nearly half for fiscal year 2008 from the all time high in 1997, records show.

In 2008, the CNMI saw a total of 396,497 visitors—a 45 percent decrease from 1997's total of 726,690 visitors.

But there is a bright spot. Tourism numbers increased from fiscal year 2007 to fiscal year 2008—albeit by less than 1 percent. And numbers have jumped exponentially since 1978, when only 86,708—all from Japan or the United States—visited the CNMI.

“Beginning in the late 1980s, the Commonwealth's visitor industry experienced a decade of phenomenal growth. Grand openings of new hotels, fueled by Japanese and Korean investment, were a regular occurrence during the decade,” said Marianas Visitors Authority's managing director Perry Tenorio said in his declaration supporting the governor's lawsuit against federalization.

The year 1997 was a good one for tourism in the CNMI. Record numbers of Japanese and Korean tourist visited the Commonwealth, but the following year overall numbers fell by 200,000.

“The bursting of the Japanese ‘bubble’ economy in the mid 1990s, followed by the Asian economic crisis in both Japan and Korea, resulted in a sharp reduction in the number of tour-

ists from those countries,” Tenorio said, adding that the 9/11 attacks and SARS crisis affected visitor numbers this decade.

But the industry was showing signs of re-growth in 2005 when 529,557 people came to the Commonwealth, Tenorio noted, although the re-growth was short-lived.

“New hotel investments had already been made, when Japan Airlines decided abruptly to cancel its direct air service to the Commonwealth,” he said. “This pullout presented one of the most difficult challenges the industry has ever faced. In the same year, Continental Airlines terminated its service to the Commonwealth from Hong Kong and Taiwan, two competitive markets in which the Commonwealth had only limited marketing dollars to spend.”

Tenorio notes the recent growth of the Russian and Chinese markets, two markets that might be affected by provisions in the new immigration laws taking effect June 1.

According to a semiannual regulatory plan issued by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security in November, visitors from China and Russia “cannot, at this time, seek admission under the Guam-CNMI Visa Waiver Program due to security concerns.”

Since 2006, the first year for Russian tourists to visit the Commonwealth, numbers have jumped nearly 300 percent to 6,178 for fiscal year 2008. Russian visitors tend to stay for lon-

ger periods of time than Japanese and Korean visitors—often for two weeks.

The China market also has grown tremendously in the last decade from 2,487 in 1997 to more than 10 times that in 2008 to 31,095.

“We believe that the Commonwealth's experience with both of these markets demonstrates that a carefully controlled visa waiver system can be implemented without any increased national security risk,” Tenorio wrote.

CHRISTMAS IN THE MARIANAS

The San Vicente Elementary School float passes by the road in front of American Memorial Park during the 7th Annual Christmas in the Marianas celebration held last Dec. 20.
CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



2 in marriage fraud convicted

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Two persons were convicted of entering into a fake marriage so one of them will get an immigration status in the CNMI.

Ryan Ray Ilo pleaded guilty to one count of immigration fraud, while Zandra Arguelles, also known as Zandra Ilo, pleaded guilty to two counts of document fraud.

Superior Court Associate Judge David Wiseman sentenced the 30-year-old Ilo to two years in prison, all suspended, except for two months. Wiseman gave Ilo credit for two days he has already served in jail.

The judge directed Ilo to start serving his two-month prison term on Jan. 5, 2009, at the Department of Corrections.

Wiseman also required Ilo to perform 50 hours of community service and pay a \$500 fine and \$25 court assessment fee plus a probation fee.

With respect to Arguelles, she was sentenced to two years in prison, all suspended, except for two days. Arguelles was given a two-day credit for the time she had already served in jail.

Arguelles, however, agreed

to be deported to the Philippines and that she would shoulder her repatriation ticket.

Arguelles agreed to assist law enforcement officials in any ongoing investigations and to testify during the prosecution against seven persons allegedly involved in immigration fraud.

The defendant was ordered to pay a total of \$550 in work permit and immigration fees for the years 2007 and 2008. She was also required to pay \$75 in fine and court assessment fee.

According to the basis of the plea agreement, on March 16, 2004, Ilo, a U.S. citizen, unlawfully entered into a marriage with Arguelles, a citizen of the Philippines.

The purposes of the marriage were to procure Arguelles' entry into the CNMI, her naturalization, and for her permanent residency in the Commonwealth.

The agreement stated that on April 13, 2007, and April 13, 2008, Arguelles represented to the Division of Immigration that she intended to reside in the CNMI as the Immediate Relative of Ilo for the sole purpose of obtaining a labor or immigration benefit and that she was entitled to an IR entry permit.

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IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

PACIFIC FINANCIAL CORPORATION,
Plaintiff,

Civil Action No. 06-0178

vs.

NOTICE OF SALE

GREGORIO C. DELA CRUZ and BERNADITA S. DELA CRUZ,
Defendants.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, pursuant to an Order issued by the Court in this matter on December 5th, 2008, I will sell, at public auction, to the highest bidder, on the terms and conditions set forth herein below, all of the right, title, and interests of Defendants, GREGORIO C. DELA CRUZ and BERNADITA S. DELA CRUZ in and to the real property and the improvement thereon and described as:

Lot No. 019 H 36 (formerly known as Lot 2, Block 36), as more particularly described on Drawing/Cadastral Plat No. 019 H 00, the original of which was registered on March 1, 1971, as Document No. 710, at the Saipan Land Registry Office.

1. Date, Time, and Place of Sale: The sale will be held on Wednesday, January 28, 2009, at the Law Offices of Timothy H. Bellas, Cactus St. & Botones Ave., Garapan at the hour of 10:00 a.m. The sale will be open to the general public.

2. Inspection of Property: The property described above is located on the island of Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands. It is the obligation of the bidder to inspect the property. Failure to inspect the property or any portion thereof will not constitute ground for any claim, adjustment or rescission by any buyer.

3. Warranties and Covenants: The real property listed for sale in this Notice and any improvements thereon will be sold in its current condition, and at its current location. The sale will be held without any warranties or covenants whatsoever, whether express or implied, including but not limited to warranties of title, merchantability, and/or fitness for any purpose whatsoever, all of which warranties and covenants are hereby expressly disclaimed. Neither the undersigned nor the Plaintiff may give any warranty or covenant, express or implied, with respect to the property listed for sale in this Notice. Neither the undersigned nor the Plaintiff shall be liable for the quality of the property listed for sale in this Notice, or for any defect in the description thereof. Buyers shall not be entitled to rescission, damages, or any other remedy on account any such defects.

4. Conduct of Sale:

a. Reserve. The auction sale may be held with reserve. The reserve price on any property offered for sale may or may not be disclosed to bidders, in the sole discretion of the undersigned.

b. Rights and Duties of Auctioneer. Consistent with the laws, customs, and usages of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands governing auction sales, the undersigned shall have the following rights and duties in conducting the auction sale: (1) to withdraw the property listed for sale in this Notice before sale or before a bid for such property is accepted; (2) to adjourn the sale without notice at any time before any bid is accepted, without incurring any liability whatsoever thereby; and (3) to reject, on behalf of the seller, any and/or all bids, for any reason.

c. Bids. Bids may be submitted in advance for the property listed in this Notice. The highest of such bids will automatically be considered the opening bid for the property at the time of the auction. Advance bids may be submitted only in writing, signed by the bidder, and delivered to the Law Offices of Timothy H. Bellas. The bidder assumes all of risk of non-delivery, late delivery, or mis-delivery of bids. Any person, including the Plaintiff, may bid in person or through an authorized agent at the auction sale, whether or not such person has submitted an advance bid.

d. Disputes. The undersigned may re-submit any property listed in the Notice if a dispute arises as to any bid thereon.

5. Enforcement of Auction Sale.

a. Deposit. Every successful bidder shall pay to the undersigned a deposit often percent (10%) of the purchase price immediately after the sale in consummated. Payment shall be in cash or by certified check. The balance must be paid to the Plaintiff, in care of Timothy H. Bellas Law Office Trust Account, within **three (3)** days from the date of sale, in cash or by certified check. If the balance is not so paid, Plaintiff will retain the deposit as liquidated damages, and will again offer the property for public sale.

6. Memorandum of Sale. If requested by the undersigned, the successful bidder shall sign a Memorandum of Sale, immediately after the sale of the property is completed at the auction.

7. Court Approval Required. Every sale is subject to approval by the Court. The auctioneer makes no warranties or promises with respect to court approval of the sale, including but not limited to the time in which such approval may be granted or denied. No delay in the granting of court approval shall be ground for any claim, adjustment, or rescission by any successful bidder. The successful bidder will be promptly notified if and when court approval is granted or denied.

8. Risk of Loss. The risk of loss for any damage to the premises shall pass to the successful bidder upon court approval of the sale.

9. Changes of Terms and Conditions. The undersigned and the Plaintiff reserve the right to change any of the terms hereof by announcement, written or oral, made before the auction sale, or the commencement thereof, and such change or changes, by virtue of this clause, shall be binding on all bidder based on actual or constructive notice.

Dated this 15th day of December, 2008.

/s/ Timothy H. Bellas
Law Offices of Timothy H. Bellas, LLC
Auctioneer
Tel. No. (670) 323-2115

'The Secret Garden' reveals island's young talents

By NAZARIO RODRIGUEZ JR.
n_rodriguez@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The local version of the Broadway musical *The Secret Garden* that drew audiences to the Charley's Cabaret of the Pacific Islands Club revealed a pool of young and home-grown talents from the various schools on Saipan.

The cast combined seasoned and promising performers, making the show an instant hit with the cast's near flawless execution of the different challenging roles.

The lead role of Mary was played by Liezel Tiples, a freshman at Marianas High School, who at a young age is already a veteran, having performed in *Into the Woods* and *Once Upon a Mattress*.

Another veteran, who played the role of Martha, was Anna Rose Deleon Guerrero of Saipan Southern High, who has also performed in 20 previous plays, including 15 musicals.

Jane Mack of the Thespians of the Western Pacific Islands said the musical is extremely hard because it is almost operatic.

"The students rose to the challenge of a very ambitious production. The cast was also of diverse nationalities with all ethnicities on Saipan put together. It was a happy, harmonious collaboration," Mack said.

She said the students did ev-



NAZARIO RODRIGUEZ JR.

Veteran stage performer Anna Rose Deleon Guerrero (Matha) shows off her acting prowess as she sings *A Fine White Horse* at Mary's sitting room. The lead role of Mary is played by another veteran, Liezel Tiples, while Merey Len Denora (Ayah) looks on in Scene 1 during the production night of the Broadway Musical *The Secret Garden* at the Charley's Cabaret of the Pacific Islands Club.

advisors] worked in the background to ensure the students had what they needed to do the their job," she said.

The Secret Garden was the third Thespian Chapter play so far. "Our goal is to provide students with the opportunity to stretch, to involve various Thespian Troupes in a large production, to provide the opportunity

exceptionally good in the second Act," assessed Mack.

She said the production required a deep field of talent, because many characters had important lines and singing time in the spotlight.

She explained that it was not a play where a few talented students could carry a large cast production.

"Nearly every one of the 20 or so named characters had songs that were either solos, duets, trios or quartets, and many of the characters had more than one important song. And the music was of an exceptionally difficult, but beautiful, nature."

Mack lauded the wonderful support from the community. "We had adults helping in the background, especially vocal coaches. We had some businesses buy program ads."

The people got their money's worth, she added.

The Secret Garden is a musical based on the children's clas-

sic by Frances Hodgson Burnett, originally published in 1909.

The story tells about Mary, an orphaned British girl recently arrived in England at her uncle's manor. Mary was determined to tend to a secret garden she discovers with the help of the chambermaid Martha. The garden, which had belonged to the uncle's wife Lily Craven (played by Miki Dela Cruz of Kagman High), was walled off when the wife died and the uncle Archibald Craven (played by Tommy Baik of MHS) was overcome with grief at her death.

With the help of Martha's brother, Dickon (played by Reece Brown of SAEF), Mary brought the garden back to life.

Mary also discovered another secret in the manor, a sickly boy named Colin (played by Mikey Johnson of Saipan Community).

Mary helped Colin regain his strength so he could surprise his father, Archibald.



NAZARIO RODRIGUEZ JR.

One of the main characters sings his part.

everything, including directing, with the supervision of Harold Easton, chapter Director of TWPI and Troupe Director of MHS.

"The artistic design down to the light plot was student created. I operated the light board, following their instructions, for example. Our student tech crew moved things along quite nicely," Easton explained.

The lone performing adult, Ruthie Fruit, helped the students pulled the musical together. "The adults [music coaches and

for artistic interaction between Troupes," said Easton, who expressed hope that the production sponsored by the Chapter will allow the students to raise their standards.

Mack said the students did well and learned a lot.

"The opening night was exciting, with the prologue and first act well-paced and interesting. The second act on Friday was also well received, although there were a few glitches. Saturday's production seemed a bit sluggish in the first Act, but was

The story wove the regeneration of the garden and Colin and the emotional health of all the members of the family into a blooming confrontation and resolution.

Dennis Chan, Downen Jocson and Joseph Martin, all from MHS, directed the show. The assistant directors were Merey Len Denora and Matthew Wheat and the stage managers were K.C. Marquez (SSHS) and Wheat.

PSS Technical Crew provided the set design/props while Kristina Alforeza was in charged of the artwork design.

Ruthie Fruit did the piano accompaniment.

The other main cast of characters (in North Yorkshire, England) were Dr. Neville Craven (Moon Hyo Lee, MHS), Mrs. Medlock (Adeleyah Mojica, MHS), Ben Weatherstaff (Christian Cruz, MHS), Jane the servant (Roseanna Sablan, SSHS), Nurse Betsy (Jan Kimberly T. Alcantara, SSHS), Photographer (Antonio Tiples, MHS) and Mrs. Winthrop (Judy Tiples, MHS).

Others (in colonial India, known as the Dreamers) were Fakir I (Loremel Hocog, KHS), Fakir II (Riya Nathrani, MHS), Ayah (Merey Len Denora, SSHS), Captain Albert Lennox (Roland Arie, MHS), Rose Lennox (Tori Brown, SAEF), Lt. Peter Wright (Sam Joyner, MHS), Lt. Ian Shaw (Matthew Wheat, MHS), Major Holmes (Jessie Boyer, MHS), Claire Holmes (Tanya Dela Cruz, KHS), Alice (Aisha Joyner, KHS), Major Shelley (Chris Barry, SIS), and Mrs. Shelly (Zalika Joyner, COV).

In the chorus (the rest of the Dreamers) were choral masters Kristina Alforeza and Wendy Dong of MHS; members Roseanna Sablan MHS; Jan K T. Alcantara MHS, Aleiko Dela Cruz KHS, Rochelle Dimapilis MHS, Chiantee Rosete MHS, Parks Keneisha MHS, Mary Ruth Quiatchon MHS, and Carlene Castro MHS.



NAZARIO RODRIGUEZ JR.

The whole cast in one of the scenes of the musical.

Kids spread spirit of 'Christmas in the Marianas'

Thousands of spectators joined over 100 student participants in spreading holiday cheer at the 7th Annual Christmas in the Marianas celebration held Dec. 20, 2008, on Saipan.

The event kicked off at 4pm with an afternoon 5K Health Walk sponsored by Saipan Walking Association, Inc. along the Beach Road pathway. The course ran from the American Memorial Park to the Japanese Tank on Beach Rd., with all participants receiving a t-shirt for joining.

Immediately following the Health Walk, Santa himself led the Christmas parade from Garapan Fishing Base through downtown Garapan. Sporting his red velvet suit and tossing candy to spectators, Santa's appearance was made possible by the elfin workers of the Department of Public Safety 3D holiday sobriety program. St. Nick was followed by seven floats loaded with Christmas decorations, most made from natural material. An estimated 600 to 800 school students also joined the parade, many with costumes made from recycled materials. Participating schools were San Antonio Ele-

mentary, Kagman Elementary, Koblerville Elementary, Chacha Oceanview Jr. High, Oleai Elementary, GTC Elementary, and Tanapag Elementary.

"The excitement kids feel at Christmas time really came through during this year's Christmas in the Marianas celebration. Their enthusiastic participation was well received by those who participated in the parade and other festivities at American Memorial Park," said Marianas Visitors Authority managing director Perry Tenorio.

Sixty students were awarded by a panel of judges for winning the float, caroling, and costume contests. A 10-minute fireworks show concluded the festive night, courtesy of Sunleader/Dragon (Saipan) Company Limited/Dragon Fireworks.

"Kids are always important in tourism, at Christmas and throughout the year," said Tenorio. "In 2009 we will again have numerous exchange programs to build friendships between local children and visiting children. We welcome sponsor families who would be willing to open



School children decked in multinational holiday attire perform Christmas carols at the 7th Annual Christmas in the Marianas celebration on Dec. 20, 2008, at the American Memorial Park on Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands. Thousands of participants and spectators joined the annual event organized by Marianas Visitors Authority, Pacific Development Inc. (Team PDI), and Saipan Walking Association, Inc.

up their homes to these children, who are eager to learn about everyday life as a child living on Saipan, Tinian and Rota."

Sponsors and supporters of Christmas in the Marianas included DFS Galleria Saipan, Japan-Saipan Travel Association, Marianas Tourism Education Council, National Parks Service, Pacific Eagle Enterprises (Mr. & Mrs. Matsumoto), Commonwealth Council for Arts & Culture, Department of Community & Cultural Affairs, National Endowment for the Arts, Mr. & Mrs. Dan Lisua, 16th NMI Legislature, Office of the Governor, Public School System, Department of Public Safety/3D Program, Island Apparel, Pacific Telecommunication Inc., Coca-Cola Bottling Co., Herman's Modern Bakery, Sorensen Pacific Broadcasting Inc., Chamolinian Cultural Village, Taga Riders Saipan and Saipan Ice Co.

The annual Christmas in the Marianas event is jointly organized by MVA, SAIWAI, and Pacific Development, Incorporated (Team PDI). (MVA)

Majuro still stunned in wake of storm surge

MELBOURNE, Australia (Radio Australia/PIR)—Many residents of Marshall Islands in the Pacific are still living in temporary accommodation, after storm surges and high tides hit the islands.

A State of Emergency was declared last week after the capital Majuro and some of the outer islands were swamped in three separate flood surges in the days leading up to Christmas.

Many homes were so badly damaged they will need to be rebuilt.

[PIR editor's note: According to The Associated Press, floodwaters forced an estimated 600 people from their homes.] The Marshall Islands Journal reports that a combination of 5-foot waves and heavy storms swamped the cities of Majuro and Ebeye, destroying plywood homes and sending residents into churches, high schools and youth centers.]

Marshall Islands tourism official, Jack Niedenthal says the streets were under a foot of water in some places.

"It wasn't anything that was really expected, I mean we get the waves lapping up close to the shore sometimes when we get these big surges but nothing like this," he said.

"It's very rare when something like this happens so it was very scary for some."

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More turbulence ahead for airlines

Some 30 airline companies collapsed this year

PORT MORESBY, Papua New Guinea (PNG Post-Courier/PIR)—The aviation industry hit severe turbulence in 2008 and is bracing for another bumpy ride in 2009 as the global financial crisis continues to dent demand for air travel.

Increased fuel prices and de-

creasing disposable incomes translated into dearer ticket prices and a softening demand for travel, especially international travel, in 2008.

The year was a “perfect storm” for the highly competitive aviation industry as oil prices skyrocketed to a high of

\$US147 a barrel in July.

Airlines are expected to collectively incur \$US5 billion in losses in 2009 due to the economic crisis, according to the International Air Transport Association (IATA).

“The outlook is bleak,” IATA director Giovanni Bisignani

said. “The chronic industry crisis will continue into 2009. We face the worst revenue environment in 50 years.”

About 30 carriers collapsed in 2008, which is more than after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the US, Bisignani has noted.

NMC hosts free information session

Those interested in furthering their education and advancing their professional careers are encouraged to attend the Northern Marianas College’s free information session which will be held on Jan. 5, 2009, at Room D-1 at the College’s As Terlaje campus, from 5:30pm to 7pm.

Representatives of different degree and certificate programs, as well as counseling, financial aid and admissions staff will be on hand to answer questions. Current students will also be speaking about their experiences at NMC and will be also be fielding questions.

Individuals who attend this free information session will qualify to have their application fee and their placement test fees waived for the Spring 2009 semester. This represents a savings of about \$75.

NMC offers several degree and certificate programs, including a bachelor of science degree in elementary education, associate degrees in business, liberal arts, nursing, natural resource management, criminal justice, hospitality management, and more. Moreover, it offers certificate programs in different vocational, academic, and professional areas.

The free information session is open to everyone, including graduating seniors and their parents, government and private sector employees, international students, and members of the general public who are interested in learning more about the programs at NMC. (NMC)

Upward Bound alumnus visits NMC, speaks to current program members

When he’s not busy flying helicopters for the U.S. Marine Corps, 1Lt. Adrian Evangelista, a former Upward Bound Program student, makes time to meet with and talk to current students about his experiences.

After graduating from the Upward Bound Program in 2000, Evangelista entered the U.S. Naval Academy in Maryland to be certified as a helicopter pilot for the U.S. Marine Corps. At the Academy, Evangelista earned a bachelor’s degree in Information Technology. He also took aviation training for his recently

earned “Wings of Gold” certification. He credits former Gov. Juan Babauta for helping him choose a military career.

During his recent visit to the Northern Marianas College, Evangelista offered some advice to current Upward Bound Students. He told the students about sacrifices and challenges that lie ahead, and that there was rewarding outcome in the end.

Evangelista also provided some insight about how he was admitted to the Academy and how he completed the rigorous program. Further,

he stressed that the Upward Bound Program was a great program that helped him prepare for college.

The Upward Bound Program at the Northern Marianas College is a federally funded program designed to help participants prepare for college. The program provides instruction in a variety of subjects; academic, financial, and personal counseling; tutorial and mentoring services; assistance with college admission forms and placement tests; and other services. (NMC)



NMC

Upward Bound alumnus 1Lt. Adrian Evangelista, second from right, of the U.S. Marine Corps poses for a photo with current Upward Bound students at the Northern Marianas College campus in As Terlaje.



COMMUNITY BRIEFS

2009 FMI/Mobil cleanup schedule

■ 1st Sunday of the month: Garapan (Tourist District, Paseo de Marianas).

Time: 8am

Meeting Place: Front of the Paseo de Marianas

■ 2nd Sunday of the month: ISA Drive Road

Time: 8am

Meeting Place: Front of San Vicente Elem. School

■ 3rd Saturday of the Month: San Vicente Elem. School (inside the school)

Time: 8am

Meeting Place: Front of the San Vicente Elem. School

■ 3rd Sunday of the month: Lau-Lau Beach

Time: 8am

Meeting Place: Pavilion at

Lau-Lau Beach

Anyone who wants to join in any scheduled cleanup may call Marites A. Castillo, FMI president/chairwoman at 285-8980/234-9769 or email: castillofmi@gmail.com. “Let’s all work together to beautify this Island of Saipan by helping us clean every weekend. It will make a big difference.” (PR)

Live-fire training on Farallon

The U.S. military will be conducting live fire training on the island of Farallon de Mendenilla on Dec. 30-31, 2008, from 6am to 11:30pm, and on Jan. 1, 2009, from 12am to 12:30am on the island Farallon de Mendenilla training area (R7201) on a 10 nautical mile radius on all quadrants.

The Emergency Management

Office is advising the public—especially fishermen, commercial pilots and marine tour operators—to stay away from this area during the time and dates indicated.

For more information, contact the EMO Operations Section at 322-9528 and 322-9529, VHF MARINE CHNL and Single Side Band Radio on 5.205.0.

Distribution of 2008 W-2CM forms

The Division of Revenue and Taxation wishes to inform all CNMI employers that the distribution of the 2008 W-2CM forms and instructions will begin on Friday, Jan. 2, 2009, from 8am to 4pm at the Office of Division of Revenue and Taxation located at the Dandan Commercial Center.

All business and employers are asked to pick up the forms

during regular business hours beginning Jan. 2, 2009. The deadline for filing the 2008 W-2CM form is Friday, Feb. 27, 2009 at 4:30pm. (PR)

DEQ brigade sets cleanup

The Division of Environmental Quality cleanup brigade will be picking up trash at San Antonio Beach in San Antonio, south of Pacific Islands Club, on Saturday, Jan. 3, 2009 at 8am. Volunteers will clean until 10am and break for drinks and then continue, if needed.

Brigade volunteers who participated in at least 10 cleanups will receive a brigade cap and those who participated in at least three will receive a green brigade t-shirt.

For more information about volunteering, contact DEQ at 664-8500. (PR)

Flashback

A LOOK BACK AT PAST YEARS' HEADLINES

December 30, 1998

On target: FAS citizens

A bill restricting entry of Freely Associated States citizens into the Northern Marianas has drawn the support of important government agencies which said that uncontrolled migration puts impact on resources and infrastructure. The bill, pending at the House of Representatives, would allow the government to strengthen its immigration system and set clear-cut policies on admitting Micronesians, according to papers submitted to the legislature. Mary Lou S. Ada, executive director of the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation, said the proposal will ease the burden of granting subsidy to low-income families under a welfare program that also covers FAS citizens.

MVA lobbies for Nagoya route

The Marianas Visitors Authority has asked the association of Japanese travel agents on the island to recommend to Japan Airlines to provide Nagoya-Saipan direct service even at least twice a week. In a letter to Kiyoshi Aikawa, president of the Japan Saipan Travel Association, MVA board chairman David M. Sablan said he is seeking the understanding of all the organization’s members to help revitalize the tourism economy which has been on a downturn due to the financial crisis in Asia. The request came after MVA found out that JAL has decided to inaugurate its daily direct flights from Nagoya to Guam beginning April 1999. Unfortunately, there has been no mention at all of any scheduled JAL Nagoya flight to Saipan.

December 30, 1999

House stalls action on FAS restriction

Lawmakers yesterday dilly-dallied on legislation seeking to restrict stay of Freely Associated States citizens in the Northern Marianas because of fears that it may strain relations with neighboring islands and lead to a decline in labor pool coming from the region. The proposed law sparked emotional discussion in the House of Representatives over the strong historical and cultural ties with peoples from FSM, Palau and the Marshalls, which together form the FAS under the Compact agreement with the United States allowing them free entry into any U.S. soil. Sponsored by Rep. Melvin O. Faisao, House Bill 11-294 or the FAS Habitual Residency Act aims to provide a mechanism by which the CNMI government can track the number of Micronesians residing on the island, as well as guidelines on who can enter into the Commonwealth.

Gov’t prepares for possible Y2K woes

An inter-agency group under the Y2K Task Force will be on stand-by beginning 10:00 p.m. on Dec. 31 to monitor and respond to possible troubles arising from the so-called millennium bug. The Unified Command System will be in operation until 6:00 a.m. New Year’s Day. The government, with the assistance of the Office of Insular Affairs, has created the monitoring team to ensure that any Y2K-related problems will be addressed immediately. According to Keith Parsky, public information officer of OIA, the Department of the Interior has established 13 command centers for this purpose, including a command post for the region.

December 30, 2002

BoG may lose govt accounts

In view of Bank of Guam’s withdrawal from an earlier proposal to grant the CNMI government its urgently needed \$19-million loan, some government officials and members of the public have proposed that the government pull out its accounts with the BoG, according to Gov. Juan N. Babauta. Babauta disclosed in an interview yesterday that several public officials and local residents made such a call following the failed loan negotiations. “There’s some feeling, a growing sentiment among our elected government officials and the general public, that we pull out-take our money from the bank-because they feel that the BoG didn’t negotiate with us in good faith,” said the Governor.

Senate moves on SEDC recommendations

Sen. Ramon Guerrero pledged to work closely with the departments of Commerce and Labor and Immigration to hammer out an acceptable business application process that would cut through the jungle of red tape that is choking the entry of new businesses into the Commonwealth. This comes in the wake of the several recommendations that were pushed by the Strategic Economic Development Council during a recent meeting with lawmakers and Executive Branch officials, including Lt. Gov. Diego T. Benavente.

Island Snapshots



FMI CLEANUP

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Members of the Friends of the Mariana Islands are shown during the cleanup at the Tun Herman Pan Road as part of the group's 2008 Environmental Restoration Drainage Project. The project was funded by Mobil Oil Mariana Islands, Inc.

Melecia P. Marquez, business manager of the Friends of the Marianas, has been recognized by the group as the 2008 FMI Volunteer of the Year and was also awarded Perfect Attendance for 2008.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



Friends of the Mariana Islands volunteers are shown cleaning up the roadside of the Tun Herman Pan Road as part of the group's 2008 Environmental Restoration Drainage Project.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Members of the Friends of the Mariana Islands clears the drainage of the Tun Herman Pan Road as part of the group's 2008 Environmental Restoration Drainage Project.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

'FIRST CHRISTMAS'

Garapan Headstart recently held a Christmas program and was visited by "Santa Claus." Photo above shows a scene from the children's rendition of the "First Christmas."



CHRISTMAS PROGRAM

Sister Remedios School celebrates Christmas with a Christmas program held Dec. 18, 2008. Here, the school's students are shown in their different costumes.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

MILLER LITE WINNERS

Miller Lite sales manager Glen Hunter, left, and PTC marketing manager Mike Babauta, right, flank Alfred Fernandez, who won a secondary prize package in the Miller Lite "Ultimate Outdoor Party Package" giveaway promo on Dec. 23. Fernandez won a Miller Lite Canopy, Miller Lite Cooler full of products, Miller Lite Dining Set and Miller Lite Special Edition NFL BBQ Grill.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



Pacific Trading Co. marketing manager Mike Babauta, left, poses with Luis Camacho and his family members after Camacho won a secondary prize package in the Miller Lite "Ultimate Outdoor Party Package" giveaway promo on Dec. 23. The contest's grand prize winner is Dwayne Borja of San Antonio.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Opinion

Hafa Adai!

Saipan Tribune

CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER
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EDITORIAL

Israel strikes

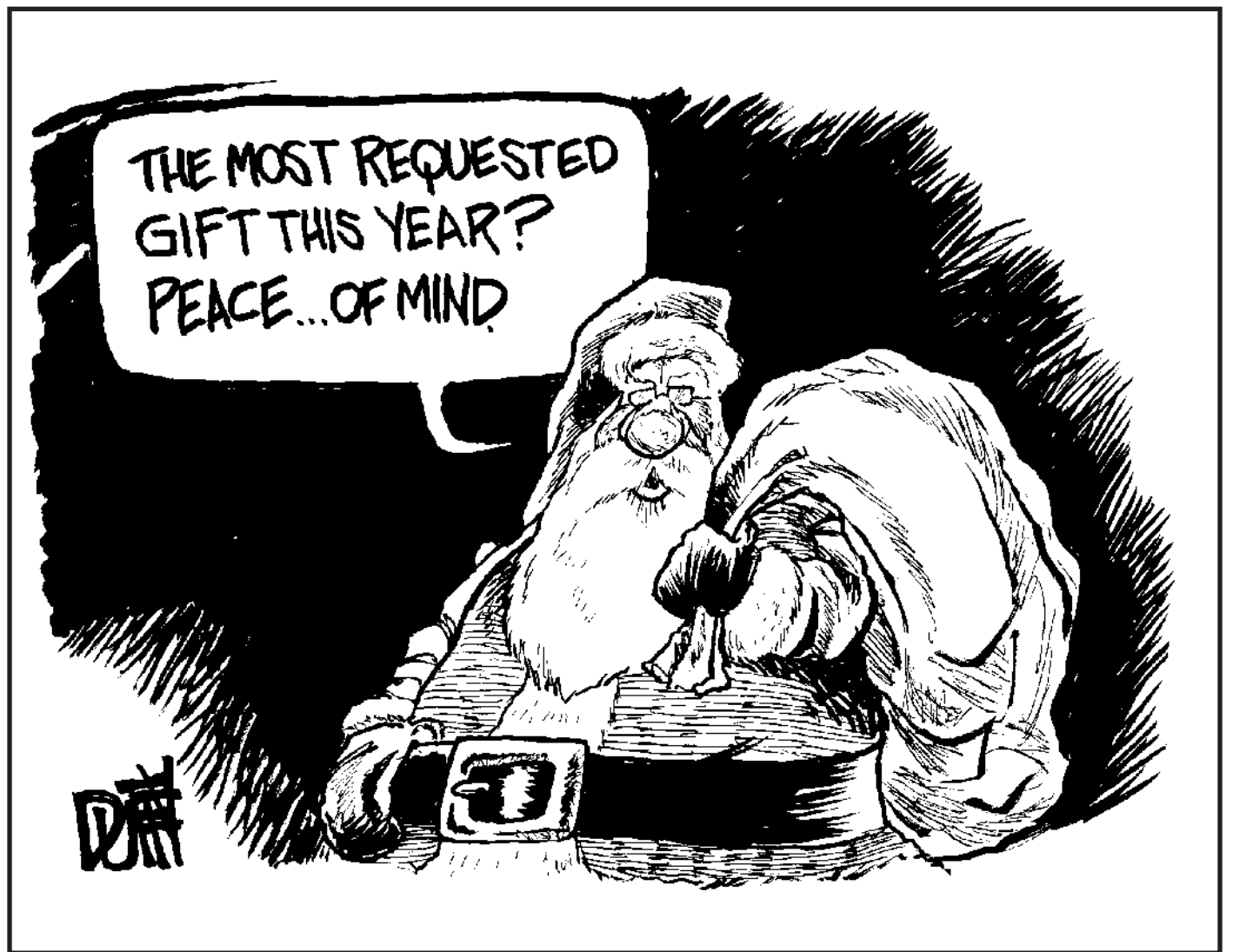
Israel's air offensive against the Gaza Strip on Saturday should not have been a surprise for anyone who has been following the mounting hostilities in the region—least of all the Hamas movement, which invited the conflict by ending a six-month-old ceasefire and launching scores of rockets and mortar shells at Israel during the past 10 days. The initial Israeli strikes appeared to deal a punishing blow to the Islamic movement, reportedly killing several of its leaders and dozens of other militants and security force members. Inevitably, however, civilians were among the more than 200 reported Palestinian dead, and renewed Palestinian rocket fire against Israeli cities killed at least one person. While Israel could justifiably describe its action as one of self-defense, it's far from clear that it will end up improving the country's security—even as it risks a wider conflict.

Israeli officials say the aim of the attack is a modest one: to force Hamas to return to the uneasy and informal truce, under which Palestinian rocket and mortar fire was curtailed if not entirely stopped and Israel relaxed but did not lift its economic blockade of Gaza. Hamas' Damascus-based leadership, which ordered an end to this "calm," as Israel calls it, also seems to have a relatively limited objective. It demands an end to all Israeli (and Egyptian) restrictions on movement in and out of Gaza in exchange for more quasi-peace. One considerable obstacle to such an outcome is that Israel is engaged in an election campaign in which the various candidates—including the serving defense and foreign ministers—are staking out hawkish positions. The outgoing Bush administration, for its part, was quick to offer support to Israel Saturday and to blame the conflict on Hamas.

Over time, however, a fight in Gaza could be costly for Israel. Military commanders have repeatedly warned that it could lead to punishing attacks on Israeli cities, spread to the West Bank or Lebanon, or force a ground invasion that would cause thousands of casualties and leave Israeli troops stranded without an exit strategy. Israel cannot stop rocket attacks by military action alone; eventually a political deal will be needed. And any hopes its leaders have of overthrowing Hamas' government in Gaza are probably illusory, unless a long-term reoccupation of the territory is undertaken.

While the fighting lasts—and Israeli officials were warning Saturday that it could be prolonged—Hamas' principal sponsor, Iran, will have achieved a tactical success. Israeli diplomats have been working feverishly in recent weeks to focus international attention on the Iranian nuclear program as the Obama administration prepares to take office. They've been warning that the new U.S. president will have to act quickly if an Iranian bomb is to be stopped. Now, for weeks or possibly months to come, all eyes will be on Gaza—on the fighting, the continued suffering of civilians and the need for a fresh settlement. Israel might have avoided this fight, and gained a diplomatic advantage of its own, by relaxing the economic blockade. Now it will be embroiled in a costly battle that, in the end, is a distraction from the most serious threat it faces.

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Peace for the Middle East

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia—President-elect Barack Obama is about to inherit not just a nation entrenched in two wars but a world of instability and an entire Middle East that is sick with discord. While disputes in this region may seem eternal, there are reasons to be optimistic. If Obama joins with forces for peace and stability and acts boldly, his presidency could have a marked impact on world affairs.

The best medicine yet formulated for the Israeli-Palestinian dispute is the Arab peace initiative of 2002. One must consider the prospect of "peace" in context.

In May, Israel celebrated the 60th anniversary of its creation. For Palestinians and their Arab and Muslim brethren, Israel's founding is "al-Naqba," or "the Catastrophe." It is the day the dream of an independent, Arab-Palestinian state was shattered; a day when the idea of a world built on equality, freedom and self-determination died.

There is universal agreement that the Palestinian people are under occupation and have been deprived of their land. It is beyond debate that their rights—which derive from divinely inspired texts, international law and the basic principles of justice and equity—have been ignored, as have all attempts to seek redress.

The Oslo Accords of 1993, the first direct agreement between the Palestinians and Israelis, marked a turning point. There was a true spirit of cooperation, expressed through the mutual desire of Israelis and Palestinians to live together in peace. The assassination of Yitzhak Rabin in 1995 tragically ended this hopeful development.

By 1998, it was evident that the peace envisioned in Oslo would not materialize. Each side holds its own view on the reasons for failure. But looking at the discussions in detail—especially after Rabin's assassination—it appears that the Israelis used Oslo as a cover through which they could appropriate more Palestinian lands, especially around Jerusalem. Israeli negotiators stubbornly fought over secondary issues while refusing to negotiate final-status issues, which would have been the keys to lasting and secure peace. Since the failure of Oslo, the waves of violence and counter-violence have

By **TURKI AL-FAISAL**

Special to The Washington Post

The writer is chairman of the King Faisal Center for Research & Islamic Studies in Riyadh. He was director of Saudi intelligence from 1977 to 2001 and Saudi Arabia's ambassador to the United States from 2005 to 2007.



been almost as predictable as the tides.

The Arab world has presented two clear proposals, the Fahd peace plan of 1981 and the 2002 Arab peace initiative. Both were endorsed by all Arab nations. The Arab world is willing to pay a high price for peace, not only recognizing Israel as a legitimate state but also normalizing relations and putting a permanent end to the state of hostilities that has existed since 1948.

In return, we ask Israel to pursue the just course laid out in various international resolutions and laws: to withdraw completely from the lands occupied in 1967, including East Jerusalem, returning to the lines of June 4, 1967; to accept a just solution to the refugee problem according to U.N. General Assembly Resolution 194; and to recognize the independent state of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital.

If peace is truly the goal, Israel must cease all provocative actions, such as continuing the building of settlements on Palestinian lands, which is a clear

If peace is truly the goal, Israel must cease all provocative actions, such as continuing the building of settlements on Palestinian lands, which is a clear violation of international law. If it does not, the world will conclude, as has former president Jimmy Carter, that Israel is interested only in increasing its power and its bargaining position.

violation of international law. If it does not, the world will conclude, as has former president Jimmy Carter, that Israel is interested only in increasing its power and its bargaining position.

Shimon Peres has offered to discuss the Arab peace initiative anytime, anywhere, and we welcome this response. At this point, the Saudi government is constrained from direct talks with Israel. Egypt and Jordan have been commissioned to meet with Israel on behalf of the Arab world. Once agreements between Palestine, Lebanon and Syria are reached with Israel, Saudi Arabia will join fully in

See **PEACE** on Next Page

EDITORIAL POLICY

The *Saipan Tribune* welcomes comments on any article, column, editorial, or topic that may be of interest to the public. Letters to the editor must include the name, address, and contact number of the contributor. Letters that are critical in nature should focus on issues, not personalities. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, CIC Centre, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

Status of Retirement Fund's investments

The ongoing financial turmoil in the global equity and fixed income markets has resulted in the United States' Department of the Treasury taking unprecedented actions over the past few months. By bailing out some of the world's leading financial services firms and taking equity stakes in publicly traded companies, the U.S. Treasury Department has rewritten the rule book on federal intervention in its efforts to stave off a global financial meltdown.

The Northern Marianas Islands Retirement Fund has felt the effects of the market turmoil along with other investors in every type of investment including stocks, bonds, mutual funds, money market funds, and the like.

In an effort to provide transparency and reassure the Fund's beneficiaries about the market impact on the Fund, members of the Fund's board of trustees felt compelled to write a public letter to disclose facts about the Fund's recent investment performance and to discuss details of the Fund's governance that might not be widely known or understood. We also thought this would be a good time to discuss how the Fund can be improved.

Overview

The Fund was established on Oct. 1, 1980, as a defined benefit plan for government employees of the Commonwealth. The Fund is governed by seven board members appointed by the governor with the advice and consent of the Senate. The board members are an eclectic group of citizens who represent the diverse CNMI population and who are entrusted with ensuring the Fund serves its statutorily mandated purpose of providing retirement benefits for all Fund members.

Despite being appointed and approved by the CNMI government, the board is apolitical and fully independent in its actions. Each board member acts as a fiduciary on behalf of Fund members and operates solely with the members' best interests in mind. This separation of politics from the management of the Fund is a key distinction that we think ought to be strengthened going forward.

Rather than continue the current system of members serving staggered four-year terms, the board would be in favor of extending the staggered terms to a minimum of six years. The staggered six-year terms would enable the Fund to more fully realize its investment in educating board members about pension programs and fiduciary responsibilities. These educational programs are only available off-island and are costly, but they are crucial in understanding pension programs generally, as well as a board member's role and responsibilities with respect to the Fund.

PEACE

From Page 10

ending hostilities and establishing diplomatic and normal relations with Israel.

Peace will require worldwide efforts. The United States, the European Union, the Russian Federation and the United Nations must embrace the Arab initiatives and pressure Israel to do the same. As Barack Obama takes office, he should not miss this critical opportunity to steer the region toward peace. Obama ought to pursue a comprehensive policy that deals with all the hot spots in the Middle East. He should:

- Call for an immediate withdrawal of Israeli forces from Shebaa Farms in Lebanon. This would remove the issue of "national liberation" from the arsenal of Hezbollah's propaganda and mitigate Syrian and Iranian interference in Lebanon.

- Work with the U.N. Security Council for a resolution guaranteeing Iraq's territorial integrity. This would dampen Iraqi politicians' ambitions for dismembering Iraq and force them to negotiate for national reconciliation, putting their interests as Iraqis before their interests as Arabs, Kurds, Shiites or Sunnis. It would also stop any ambitions—economic or territorial—that Iraq's neighbors may be considering.

- Encourage Israeli-Syrian negotiations for peace. This would engage Syria and diminish Iranian obstructionism. It would also force Palestinian groups based in Syria to follow the Syrian example.

- Declare America's intention to work for a Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction, with a security umbrella and other incentives for countries that sign up and a sanctions regime for those that don't. This would remove the issue of double standards that the Iranian government uses to raise support among its people for its nuclear policy. It would also resolve the security concerns with which Israel's leaders justify their possession of nuclear weapons.

Stabilizing the Middle East will require patience, determination, tough diplomacy and empathy. The effort, however, will be well worth the result. As the late Indian diplomat Vijaya Lakshmi Nehru Pandit said: "The more we sweat in peace, the less we bleed in war."

Board members' responsibilities

The law of the Commonwealth mandates that the board invest all reserve monies, after paying for operational costs. This simple statement underlies two key areas of responsibility for the board: asset management and operations management.

In the area of operations management, the board is responsible for the efficient management of the Fund staff and facilities to ensure that benefit payments are paid when due to the beneficiaries of the Fund. In this regard, over the past year, the board has undertaken a thorough review of all operating expenses, including professional services, to ensure that the Fund is operating on a lean and cost-effective basis.

In the area of asset management, the board and its consultant, Merrill Lynch, have established an Investment Policy Statement, which effectively serves as the "road map" for the management of the Fund's investment portfolio by a group of qualified, professional investment managers. Each of the Fund's investment managers must abide by the guidelines and restrictions detailed in the IPS in serving as a fiduciary of the Fund while fulfilling their specific investment management mandate.

The Fund's consultant

Merrill Lynch, the Fund's consultant, is responsible for serving as an arm's length advisor to the board, but Merrill Lynch does not have any decision-making authority, nor does it have discretionary control, over any of the Fund's investment portfolio. Instead, the firm is responsible for monitoring the Fund's investment managers and the total pool of assets to ensure compliance with the Fund's IPS and to confirm the accuracy of the investment managers' performance reports.

In addition to monitoring the performance of the Fund's investment portfolio, Merrill Lynch plays a key advisory role to the board by conducting educational investment seminars, helping to screen investment manager candidates, and providing the board with written research reports on a wide range of financial and economic-related topics.

Merrill Lynch has also worked with the Fund's actuary to provide the board with an estimate of the Fund's long-term funding status by conducting an asset-liability study that helped identify and quantify the significantly under-funded status of the Fund that, in its current state, will leave the Fund unable to meet all of its benefit obligations to Fund members.

Headline events over the past year that have involved Merrill Lynch, such as the firm's recent merger with Bank of America, a write-down in the valuation of assets, and a turnover at their chief executive officer's position, has not had and will not have an impact on Merrill Lynch's ability to serve as the consultant to the board.

The board has full faith and confidence in Merrill Lynch and, as part of the actions of a responsible fiduciary, the board earlier this year completed a public search for an alternative consultant and, in the end, decided to retain Merrill Lynch as the Fund's consultant for the foreseeable future.

Current financial crisis

If the CNMI government continues to ignore its legal obligations to the Fund by not paying the actuarially determined and statutorily scheduled employer contributions to the Fund, the government will eventually face limited and unattractive options such as: 1) increasing taxes to pay full pension benefits; 2) reducing the current number of government employees to cut expenditures; or 3) reducing

By **JUAN T. GUERRERO**

Special to the Saipan Tribune



Juan T. Guerrero is the chairman of the NMI Retirement Fund board of trustees.

the Fund members' benefits.

Unfortunately, the CNMI government has been unable to remit the proper actuarially-determined employer contribution, thus contributing significantly to the Fund's dire financial situation.

Given this reality, it is unfair and incorrect to place the blame for the Fund's current financial status on the board members and/or its consultant, Merrill Lynch. While the Fund has felt the effects of the recent turmoil in the global investment markets, in terms of performance, the Fund compares quite favorably as compared to other institutional investment funds that hold both stocks and bonds. For the period ending Dec. 31, 2007, the Fund's annualized investment rates of return are ranked in the following manner:

- Top 6th percentile over the trailing 3 year period;
- Top 1st percentile over the trailing 5 years period;
- Top 10th percentile over the trailing 10 years period.

This type of investment performance has helped the Fund generate above-benchmark returns and investment income to offset the CNMI government's nonpayment of legally obligated employer contributions over the past few years.

From the calendar year-to-date period ending Oct. 31, 2008, the Fund has experienced a decline in the value of its investment portfolio of approximately 28 percent. Despite suffering a loss of this magnitude, the Fund's performance has still managed to outperform various countries' stock markets for the comparable period as demonstrated by the returns of the stock market indices listed below:

- S&P 500 (USA): -33 percent
- MSCI United Kingdom: -43 percent
- MSCI Germany: -47 percent
- MSCI France: -44 percent
- MSCI Japan: -36 percent
- MSCI Hong Kong: -55 percent
- MSCI China: -57 percent
- MSCI India: -64 percent
- MSCI Russia: -65 percent

During the prior periods in which the stock market was registering positive returns, the strong performance of the Fund was able to generate investment income that was necessary to make benefit payments to Fund members in light of the lack of CNMI government contributions. However, now that the stock market has declined globally, the Fund is faced with two negative factors: 1) a decline in the dollar value of the Fund's investment portfolio; and 2) a continued lack of employer contributions from the CNMI government. These factors have placed the Fund in a fiscal emergency that must be addressed immediately.

The board conducts monthly meetings, which are open to the public, in compliance with the Open Government Act. We allocate time at those meetings to hear from any person and/or group who may wish to address the board. We must work together as a community to address the economic crisis at the Fund because when the Fund is unable to pay retirees' their pension, it will negatively and greatly impact the CNMI's economy.

Letter to the Editor

Relocate poker arcades to hotels

In reference to the complete removal of poker machines in the CNMI, Taotao Tano CNMI Inc. believes that the reality of it all is true but to completely phase out poker machines at this point is not going to help our dwindling revenues, whether we like it or not. What our legislative branch should be considering, which should have been done years ago, is re-evaluate the situation.

Currently, it is estimated that there are 680 poker machines just on Saipan. We recommend that they be distributed evenly throughout all hotels, giving the hotel owners ultimate responsibility. Slash the annual pokers fees by half and have the hotel establishments pay the 10 percent tax from revenues collected, provided and ensuring that rules and regulations are promulgated and enforced. Hotel establishment have 24-hour security surveillance and there are people working around the clock so it will deter any criminal activity. Placing the poker machines at the hotels will limit, if not prevent, further addiction of such gambling within our

local community. Tourists enjoy this type entertainment in hotels.

Instead of a complete phase out, we urge that all poker machines be removed from all villages, stores, laundromats and restaurants and relocated to hotel establishments, simply because our homeland is dependant on such revenues, to include appropriations for the Northern Marianas College.

We urge our lawmakers to think this out positively and do not hasten decisions that would further diminish our dwindling revenues for there is a solution. The statements by our government of having only licensed casinos to be authorized to operate poker machines is somewhat deceptive and actually promotes the establishment of casinos on Saipan, which is not supported by the people.






Gregorio Cruz Jr.

President, Taotao Tano CNMI Inc.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam Homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

The Weather

5-Day Forecast for Saipan and Tinian

TODAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				
Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 15 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 15 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
▲87° ▼78°	▲87° ▼78°	▲87° ▼78°	▲87° ▼78°	▲87° ▼78°

Micronesia

Guam and Rota	Mostly Sunny	▲83 ▼75
Palau	Rain	▲86 ▼78
Yap	Rain	▲87 ▼77
Chuuk	Showers	▲88 ▼78
Pohnpei	Showers	▲87 ▼76
Kosrae	Rain	▲86 ▼79
Majuro	Rain	▲84 ▼77

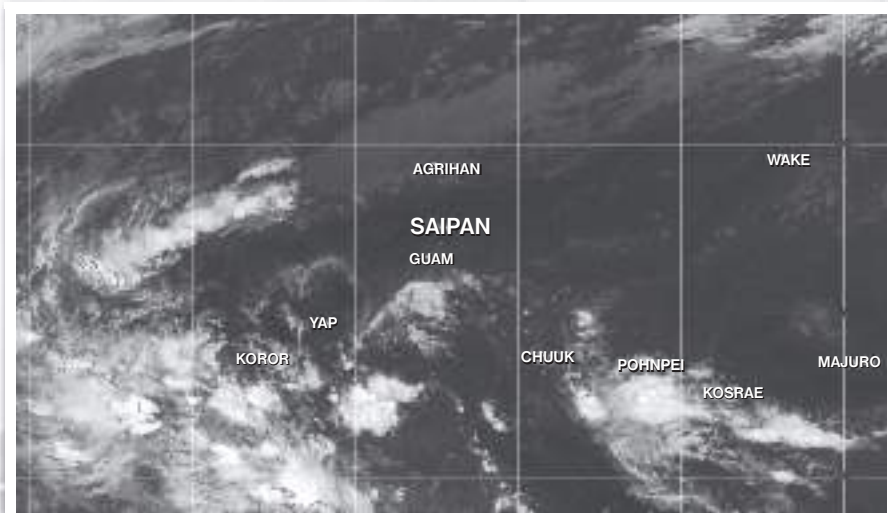
Around The Globe

Auckland	Mostly Cloudy	▲76 ▼68
Beijing	Sunny	▲28 ▼12
Hong Kong	Rain	▲66 ▼61
Honolulu	Showers	▲79 ▼70
London	Cloudy	▲45 ▼34
Los Angeles	Mostly Sunny	▲67 ▼48
Manila	Mostly Cloudy	▲85 ▼73
Melbourne	Showers	▲67 ▼49
Miami	Showers	▲79 ▼64
New York	Partly Sunny	▲47 ▼34
Osaka	Showers	▲45 ▼33
Paris	Sunny	▲38 ▼33
Pusan	Partly Sunny	▲40 ▼22
Rome	Cloudy	▲50 ▼33
Salem	Rain	▲42 ▼38
San Francisco	Mostly Sunny	▲56 ▼45
Seoul	Partly Sunny	▲30 ▼21
Tokyo	Mostly Sunny	▲54 ▼43
Washington, DC	Partly Sunny	▲53 ▼37

Tides

Saipan Harbor		
3:21AM Today	Low Tide:	0.3 Feet
10:33AM Today	High Tide:	1.8 Feet
4:00PM Today	Low Tide:	1.3 Feet
8:26PM Today	High Tide:	1.8 Feet

Yesterday's Satellite Image



PICTURE TIME: 1:00AM, MONDAY, DEC. 29, 2008

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

A shear line runs southwestward from 25N170E through the Northern Marianas at 19N146E to beyond 130E at 15N. Cloudiness and patchy rain are found along and up to 200 miles north of the shear line. A surface circulation is located southeast of Palau near 3N135E. A near-equatorial trough extends eastward from 4N130E through the circulation then turns southeastward to end at EQ140E. Another surface trough runs northeastward from the circulation to end at 13N140E just west of Guam. Scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms are found between the equator and 5N from 130E to 138E across Palau and Yap between 5N and 10N from 132E to 139E and west of Guam between 10N and 14N from 139E to 144E. A weak surface trough runs from EQ144E to 5N141E. Trade-winds converging near the trough are triggering scattered showers and a few thunderstorms along and up to 70 miles northeast of the trough axis. A surface trough south of Chuuk extends from 1N154E to 7N150E. Scattered showers and a few thunderstorms are occurring within 100 miles of the trough. Trade-wind convergence is generating scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms south of Kosrae and Majuro within 100 miles of a line from 1N162E to 2N168E to 5N176E.

Sunrise/Sunset

Today	6:42AM	5:57 PM
Wednesday	6:43AM	5:57 PM
Thursday	6:43AM	5:58 PM
Friday	6:44AM	5:58 PM
Saturday	6:44AM	5:59 PM

Moonrise/Moonset

Today	8:34AM	8:13 PM
Wednesday	9:13AM	9:02 PM
Thursday	9:50AM	9:51 PM
Friday	10:26AM	10:39 PM
Saturday	11:01AM	11:29 PM

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 - ISLAND SNAPSHOTS Birthdays, baptisms, christenings, family gatherings, reunions, club activities, and other community-related events.
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 - BUSINESS Corporate donations, volunteer work, promotions, granting of awards, team-building exercises, meetings and other activities by members of the business community.
 - SAMU'T SARI Pictures from the islands' Filipino community, primarily focusing on Filipino activities, gatherings, get-togethers, volunteer work, etc.
 - TRAVELOGUE Pictures of off-island travels. Contributors may submit up to 10 pictures for consideration.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- COMMUNITY BRIEFS

- Announcements of upcoming activities of organizations, community clubs, government agencies, and private companies.
- CAMPUS BULLETIN Announcements of upcoming activities in public and private schools, as well as calendar of activities. May include PTSA meetings, enrollment procedures.

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 - Must have complete details (who, what, where, when), the name of contact person, and phone number.
 - Photos must have been taken in the last two months.
 - For birthday greetings, must be submitted no later than 12 noon of the previous day to make it to next day's edition.
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 - Must have complete details (who, what, where, when),

- the name of contact person, and a phone number.
- Must be submitted no later than 12 noon to make it to next day's edition.

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- Drop off: 2nd Floor, CIC Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan
- To check if contributions are received, call (670) 235-6397, 235-2440, 235-8747

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF DECEMBER 20, 2008

DEPARTURES	ARRIVALS
Saipan-Rota CO9597 11:50am 12:25pm 1,7	Rota-Saipan CO 9598 3:25am 4:00am 5,6
Saipan-Guam CO9317 5:00am 5:50am Daily CO9313 8:30am 9:20am Daily CO9597 11:50am 1:20pm 1,7 via Rota CO9601 12:30pm 1:20pm 2,3,4,5,6 CO9603 3:30pm 4:20pm Daily CO9605 6:30pm 7:20pm Daily CO9599 9:30pm 10:20pm Daily	Guam-Saipan CO 9316 2:30am 3:20am 1,2,3,4,7 CO9598 2:30am 4:00am 5,6 via Rota CO9596 7:00am 7:50am Daily CO9600 10:20am 11:10am Daily CO9602 2:00pm 2:50pm Daily CO9604 5:00pm 5:50pm Daily CO9606 8:00pm 8:50pm Daily
Saipan-Narita NW 099 5:00am 7:40am Daily NW 078 8:25am 1:30pm Daily NW 075 4:55pm 7:30pm Daily	Narita-Saipan NW 076 10:15am 2:40pm Daily NW 077 6:25pm 1:25am+1 Daily NW 100 8:45pm 1:15am+1 Daily
Saipan-Osaka OZ 119 4:00am 6:40am 1,4,6 NW 083 4:30pm 7:20pm Daily	Osaka-Saipan OZ 120 9:50pm 2:20am+1 3,5,7 NW 084 10:40am 3:10pm Daily
Saipan-Nagoya NW 078 8:25am 11:05am Daily	Nagoya-Saipan NW 077 9:00pm 1:25am+1 Daily
Saipan-Incheon OZ 604 2:10am 6:00am 1 OZ 604 2:40am 6:30am 2,3,4,5,6,7 OZ 606 3:20pm 7:00pm Daily	Incheon-Saipan OZ 605 9:00am 2:20pm Daily OZ 603 7:40pm 1:00am+1 7 OZ 603 8:10pm 1:30am+1 1,2,3,4,5,6
Saipan-Busan OZ 608 3:50am 7:20am 1,4,5,7	Busan-Saipan OZ 607 9:30pm 2:40am+1 3,4,6,7
Saipan-Shanghai FM 844 2:50am 5:40am 2,6	Shanghai-Saipan FM 843 7:15pm 1:50am+1 1,5
Rota-Guam CO 9597 12:50pm 1:20pm 1,7	Guam-Rota CO 9598 2:30am 3:00am 5,6
Guam-Manila CO 893 5:50pm 9:10pm 3,5 via Koror CO 933 8:00pm 9:40pm Daily PR 111 6:00am 7:50am 1,2,4,6,7	Manila-Guam CO 892 10:10pm 5:30am+1 3,5 via Koror CO 934 11:10pm 4:40am+1 Daily PR 110 10:10pm 4:00am+1 1,3,5,6,7
Editor's Note: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); CO: Continental; FM: Shanghai Airlines; PR: Philippine Airlines; NW: Northwest; OZ: Asiana ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)	

FREEDOM AIR FLIGHT SCHEDULE

Airline	ETD	ETA	Frequency	Airline	ETD	ETA	Frequency
Guam-Rota				FRE 113	11:40am	11:50am	Daily
FRE 100 7:00am 7:30am Daily				FRE 115	1:00pm	1:10pm	Daily
Rota-Saipan				FRE 117	2:30pm	2:40pm	Daily
FRE 100 7:50am 8:20am Daily				FRE 119	4:00pm	4:10pm	Daily
Saipan-Rota				FRE 121	4:40pm	4:50pm	Daily
FRE 200 9:00am 9:30am Daily				FRE 123 *	5:40pm	5:50pm	Daily
Rota-Guam				FRE 125 *	6:00pm	6:10pm	Daily
FRE 200 9:50am 10:15am Daily				Tinian-Saipan w/ connecting flights to Rota or Guam**			
Guam-Rota				FRE 102	7:05am	7:15am	Daily
FRE 300 4:00pm 4:30pm Daily				FRE 104	7:50am	8:00am	Daily
Rota-Saipan				FRE 106**	8:20am	8:30am	Daily
FRE 300 4:50pm 5:25pm Daily				FRE 108**	9:00am	9:10am	Daily
Saipan-Rota				FRE 110	10:00am	10:10am	Daily
FRE 400 6:00pm 6:30pm Daily				FRE 112	11:05am	11:15am	Daily
Rota-Guam				FRE 114	12:00pm	12:10pm	Daily
FRE 400 6:45pm 7:15pm Daily				FRE 116	1:30pm	1:40pm	Daily
Saipan-Tinian				FRE 118	2:50pm	3:00pm	Daily
FRE 101 6:45am 6:55am Daily				FRE 120**	4:20pm	4:30pm	Daily
FRE 103 7:30am 7:40am Daily				FRE 122**	5:00pm	5:10pm	Daily
FRE 105 8:00am 8:10am Daily				FRE 124	6:05pm	6:15pm	Daily
FRE 107 8:40am 8:50am Daily				FRE 126	6:20pm	6:30pm	Daily
FRE 109* 9:10am 9:20am Daily							
FRE 111* 10:45am 10:55am Daily							



NMI CRIME STOPPERS

Anonymous tips can now be submitted through the following:

- Call 234-7272 (PARA) on any telephone
- *11 on any PTI cellular phone
- Log on to the internet at www.nmicrimestoppers.com

Delusional + disingenuous + disinformation = disgraceful + disaster

This has been my reaction to the both the Senate President's latest interview on the NMIRF's imminent bankruptcy and Precinct 3 legislator Heinz Hofschneider's proposed bill to induce senior government employees to take a buy-out to reduce the government payroll by just a possible 300 and seek a \$250 million obligation bond for the Fund to remedy a minor part of the Fund's total indebtedness.

These two have about 40 years of legislative experience between them and this is what we get? Eleven months to the next election. Some legislators are stirring from their slumber and shouting "havoc" and "raise taxes." But this is just continuing to rearrange the Titanic's deck chairs on its ever steepening deck as our governor conducts the ship's orchestra in a soothing melody for the panicked residents. But the chair action and the orchestra is an effort to mask the looming reality of the inevitable fate in the frigid waters that awaits those not fortunate enough to be in or have a reserved seat in a CNMI government lifeboat.

Should we presume they have checked the CNMI's current bond rating with Standard & Poor for a revenue bond based on government income? Or even the current fund managers?

My economic experience is very limited but I know these ratings are made on the basis of sustained fiscal and operational performance. And in today's tight, tight credit market where even credit for cars/trucks is harder to come by...well, perhaps they might fac-

Live with it or leave

This is in response to Ms. Berueco's letter. I've been standing in the sidelines watching, or in my case, reading all these letters between you and Mr. McCue and I must say you are so distorted that I want to share my take on this. Not only won't you admit to the fallacy of your thoughts and opinions, but you also go on and attack Mr. McCue, telling him he is not on the island and therefore is not entitled to speak his mind. Are you kidding me? Who are you to tell people when to talk and when not to? It seems to me you enjoy using this medium to speak your mind. Why can't he? Is it because he is somewhere in Florida? Come on! I guess that should give me every right to speak then. For one, I am local, 100-percent Refalawasch and proud to be one, and I've only been off island for a short while. How does that sound to you?

I don't really care what you think. But here is what I think about you. You talk about being a group of mature people and yet you are vindictive in your personal attacks on Mr. McCue. You want people, and the government, be it the CNMI government or the feds, to believe you. Grow up and do not ever tell another human being if he can talk or otherwise. You are being immature and it will not help your cause. I agree with you on this, no individual should ever force another to do anything against his or her wishes. It is immoral, inhumane, and unconstitutional.

Tina, Ben and the good ol' boys

It intrigued me to note the recent *New York Times* article on "arrests on corruption per one million people" with Guam-CNMI being in third position. Though these Mariana Islands have an approximate 250,000 population, graft and corruption is everywhere: department heads, supervisory-level appointees, line crews, name it. Especially those masquerading as elected officials. Just prior to that article was the coverage about the recent death of "Deep Throat" Mark Felt, once the second man in the CIA hierarchy who brought down the Nixon administration nearly four decades ago and inspired the hit movie, *All The Presidents Men*. To paraphrase what special ops troops say: "Jail them all, let God sort the rest out."

And then I thought of Tina.

Newly elected Rep. Tina Sablan, only a year ago the tear-swollen Joan of Arc among the thousands of guest workers holding candles, singing and kissing and locking arms—legal or illegal, praying for a miracle to get a free ride to the United States of America deserving or undeserving, never mind—has wisely abandoned this delusion in the aftermath of the U.S. P.L. 110-229, which takes effect June 1, 2009. And now she's on another crusade, this time against Governor Fitial.

Commendable? I think not. Could Tina strongly desire to be, similar to Deep Throat, the one to bring down the Fitial Administration? Wrong play. Does Representative Sablan strongly believe that Governor Fitial is another Nixon and because of it she's compelled to become a tick in local history for doing just that? Worse yet. To Tina, the governor's rights granted him by the CNMI Constitution and local laws to perform his sworn duties for the betterment of the community play no part in her personal motivation. So be it.

But there's more.

I've tracked the "meteoric political career" of Representative Sablan. Unfortunately for all of us, I've now determined she has abandoned her original and once admirable premise of why she should

tor in our not having had a coup d'état. And the PSS bond for school building was paid off recently and on time.

The revenue bond market lenders, however, don't do kind little things for the lendees as the federal government has recently done for Freddie Mac, Fanny Mae, the major banks or the GM/Chrysler loans bailout. When the potential market lend-

When the potential market lenders are told the bond is to pay off NMIRF arrears, when they parse through the fiscal status of the government, then review its tax generating operations of the recent past and gauge its future revenue generating capability, they will give a simple but polite "No."

ers are told the bond is to pay off NMIRF arrears, when they parse through the fiscal status of the government, then review its tax generating operations of the recent past and gauge its future revenue generating capability, they will give a simple but polite "No." It comes, as I understand, in the form of a rating designated by a letter of the alphabet followed by a plus or minus sign.

GovGuam was elated recently after having received news

But as Mr. McCue and every indigenous Chamorro and Refalawasch has been telling you and every unhappy nonresident worker on those beautiful islands of ours, you know where the airport is. If things there are so ugly you cannot continue living as the privileged individual you all have become, purchase yourself and your families an airline ticket and go home. Oh wait, the economic crisis doesn't afford you to do that? Gee, how about you stop sending all your earning home so you will have enough to buy your tickets then?

You state, "I am enjoying my life here in the CNMI and [that] the CNMI [has] made my life better." We all know that, your family and friends back home know that, heck the world knows and believe me, a lot of people know about your plight and what it is that is driving you and this movement. We also know that going back to the life you left will definitely put a HUGE dent on your pocketbook. That is what scares you and the countless contract workers there. You do not want to go back to the poverty you left behind. But that does not give you the right to come as a guest worker and demand that my people bend over backwards to please you. I wouldn't ever and I don't think every breathing Chamorro and Refalawasch there would either!

Let's do some role reversal here and you tell me this: Would your government or your people do something of this magnitude in your

be elected: bring good to the community's well-being by cleaning up the bad mess on the hill. If her heart truly beats to right wrongs, and if her courage can withstand subversion and derision, then she'd be attacking the core of the rot, the malfeasance, and the incompetence: the graybeards and the deadwoods. Surrounding her, sitting next her, interacting with her on a daily basis from both houses are those who have committed crimes, are in the process of committing crimes and without doubt shall commit even more crimes in the future. And that's besides passing irrelevant and insufferable bills only to be repealed weeks later. In the past, about a dozen elected officials have gone to jail. By reference, there are two guys right now running around up there who should've been thrown in jail after they were caught red-handed for hiring and paying "phantom employees" but skirted justice by the hair of their chinny-chin-chin. Those monies paid out amounted to hundreds of thousands of taxpayers' dollars. And they're running for re-election. And there's another guy—who's battling several other graybeards for the silver chalice of holding the most positions in the Legislature—recently bilked the federal government out of \$150,000 free money for a local fish market which belied-up within a month. He's running for governor while seeking yet another free federal grant for yet another fish market. That single "crime" is unconscionable on its face. Collectively? If added up, the past and present damage committed by both houses of horror could come out to a grand five-fold-killing to the CNMI, far greater than the \$400,000 the governor requires in pursuit of the lawsuit against the U.S., that which Tina has sworn to sue the CNMI government to reveal the source of that money—without a fickle finger of regret.

If Tina's fervor is such she can articulate an attack on the governor, then why not articulate that same desire to expose the crimes those "colleagues" (to use this term loosely) on the hill

from their brokerage to the effect that their bond rating went "up" from a BB+ to a BBB-. This can lower the interest rate charged for a future bond and represents interest savings.

With a bond market rejection within two months, there will be nine more to go before the election. What could be the next delaying step by these two legislators (if it must be another leg-

islative attempt to fix the CNMI): try the junk bond market? These are the very "high risk" bond shopper category. Remember the Millikin story of the past decade or so?

I do sincerely admire Bill Stewart who has continued to be polite to a fault with his advice over the years to our self-styled experts, and, of course, he continues to be dismissed as some old Trust Territory coot still wandering around the Capital Hill offices at night with a candle.

I remember what a very wise, old Palauan women from the TT days once told me about our formative island government as we sat listening to the inaugural address of Carlos I: "You must not throw the jewels in front of the pigs when it is their feeding time." Her studied opinion, of course, but we did go through more than a decade of "jewels" and we ate them all without knowing and preserving any of their real value.

George Haberman

Upper Sadog Tasi, Saipan

country if I went to work there and found things not to my liking? Would it or yourself let me and other non-indigenous folks march and demand for changes? Especially if I start bringing the rest of my family members as tourists and like many of you have done, go into hiding, and then complain that life is hard and the people treat me like a slave. How would you feel? What would you tell me and countless others who are causing a ruckus in your country demanding all that you are asking for now?

I, like countless others, am starting to sound like a scratched CD in telling you this. If you do not like how things are, go back home where things should be better for you with the family support have there and whatnot. Better yet, find another country where your services and expertise are needed. But do not impose yourself and your ideologies on my people. Like you said so yourself, you have accepted the conditions of your life so you either live with it or leave. Ask all your questions, you have every right to but be a mature individual and move on if it is not working out for you anymore. That is the logical thing to do. Stop all your whining and enjoy the holidays. Merry Christmas!

Alex Rangamar

Horn Lake, MS

are doing? Misappropriation of public funds ? Tip of the iceberg. Like that *NY Times* article and the *Saipan Tribune's* "Flashback" section, these criminals have been well-documented and many, again, being these self-indulging elected officials. Astute readers of "Flashback" can track precisely what crimes were being or about to be, committed by these crypt keepers—and those handful of graybeards who have been in office too long and know how to mask their activities too well. Other than the current federal indictments of Lt. Gov. Timothy Villagomez, former Commerce director James Santos and his wife (Timothy's sister), and former CUC head Guerrero—the group that allegedly misappropriated more than \$500,000 of public funds—are there others yet to be brought to justice? We'd be at fault if they weren't.

Tina, sadly, is fearful of attacking that core of rot. Tina has discovered she is fighting the losing battle going up against the good-ol'-boys network of the graybeards and the deadwoods. Tina has finally awakened to the stark reality that those creeps on the hill don't want her to break ranks, or "get on the train..." as they put it, to deprive them of their right to shuck-n-jive, prance and preen and squander over \$200,000—each—annually, and run for office ad infinitum.

Thus? Rep. Tina Sablan has cast all her energies to go after the lesser of the two evils and the one easier to attack: Governor Fitial. I once believed Rep. Sablan was on the right course when she was elected to office. It saddens many, and myself, who have followed her efforts and gave her our support. Tina has learned a stinging lesson up there: lofty ideals have no place in smash-mouth island politics. Tina has been chastised.

Tina has given up.

Lee Andersen

Chalan Kanoa, Saipan

Business

Wall St. closes out on 2008, year of record losses

NEW YORK (AP)—Investors are preparing to close out the last three trading days of 2008, a year in which Wall Street has logged its worst performance since Herbert Hoover was president.

The ongoing recession and global economic shock pummeled stocks this year, with the Dow Jones industrial average

slumping 36.2 percent. That's the biggest drop since 1931 when the Great Depression sent stocks reeling 40.6 percent.

The Standard & Poor's 500 index is set to record the biggest drop since its creation in 1957. The index of America's biggest companies is down 40.9 percent for the year.

With these statistics ready to

play out this week, it is little wonder why investors are all too happy to close the books on 2008. Analysts are already looking toward January as a crucial period for the market as it tries to recover some of the \$7.3 trillion wiped from the Dow Jones Wilshire 5000 index, the broadest measure of U.S. stocks.

"It is hard to gauge a recovery because there's so many things out there that are interactive with each other," said Scott Fullman, director of derivatives investment strategy for WJB Capital Group in New York. "Nothing is in a vacuum. Anybody who is managing money has to be on the cautious side for at least the first six months of 2009."

He said many analysts are jumping past this week and

focusing on next month, especially with Barack Obama set to be sworn in as president on Jan. 20. There is hope that the new administration will deliver another stimulus package, which along with December's interest rate cuts, might help quell the financial crisis.

Trading is expected to remain volatile with many market participants on the sidelines during the holiday-shortened week, but that doesn't mean investors

won't be kept busy. With no Santa Claus rally last week, economic data slated for the coming days could sway the market's mood going into 2009.

Late Sunday, traders began to pull back slightly in early futures trading. Dow industrials futures fell 36 points, or 0.42 percent, to 8,436. S&P 500 futures fell 3.40, or 0.39 percent, to 865.50, while Nasdaq-100 futures dropped 5.00, or 0.42 percent, to 1,183.50.



AP

A man dressed as Santa Claus greets traders on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, Wednesday, Dec. 24, 2008 in New York.

Oil jumps above \$39 as Israel-Gaza conflict widens

SINGAPORE (AP)—Oil prices rose to above \$39 a barrel Monday in Asia, jumping for a second trading day as a widening conflict between Israel and Gaza raised tensions in the oil-rich Middle East.

Light, sweet crude for February delivery rose \$1.37 to \$39.08 a barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange by midday in Singapore. The contract on Friday rose \$2.36 to settle at \$37.71.

Israel expanded its deadliest-ever air offensive against Gaza's Hamas rulers Sunday and prepared for a possible ground invasion. Arab leaders protested the attacks and Syria broke off indirect peace talks with the Jewish state.

With the two-day death toll nearing 300, Hamas fired rockets deeper than ever into Israel.

"There could be fear that an escalating Middle East conflict could disrupt supplies, though I don't see that happening at this point," said Gerard Rigby, energy analyst with Fuel First Consulting in Sydney. "(Israel-Palestinian conflict) always causes a bit of a blip and is one component that could support prices short-term."

Oil prices have fallen 73 percent since peaking at \$147.27 a barrel on July 11 as a credit crisis in the U.S. sparked a steep drop-off in consumer demand and corporate earnings. Analysts expect more dismal economic news from the

fourth quarter over the next few weeks.

"More bad profit reports, jobs reports, housing results will put pressure on prices," Rigby said. "Once Obama comes in, that might start changing sentiment and generate more optimism."

Barack Obama is scheduled to be sworn in as U.S. president on Jan. 20.

Trading volumes have been low as many traders take off the week between Christmas and New Year's Day.

In other Nymex trading, gasoline futures rose 3.16 cents to 88 cents a gallon. Heating oil gained 3.30 cents to \$1.28 a gallon while natural gas for January delivery jumped 16.3 cents to \$5.99 per 1,000 cubic feet.

Bad harvest, low demand threaten Pacific fishermen

HALF MOON BAY, Calif. (AP)—An unusually weak Dungeness crab harvest is compounding the financial woes of West Coast fishermen who were already struggling with depressed consumer demand and the unprecedented collapse of the Pacific chinook salmon fishery.

Commercial fishermen in California, Oregon and Washington are struggling to stay afloat financially. They say the downturn could force fishermen who depend heavily on crab and salmon to leave the shrinking ranks of the region's

fishing fleet.

"With this crab season being slim at best, it's going to be pretty hard to make it through to the next one," said 58-year-old Duncan MacLean, a commercial fisherman since 1972. "I would suspect there are going to be lots of people falling by the wayside."

The Dungeness season that began in mid-November is shaping up to be one of the least productive in years. In Half Moon Bay, about 25 miles south of San Francisco, MacLean and other crabbers are not doing much fishing because the catch

is so poor and prices offered by seafood processors are so low.

"It's disappointing to everybody because you want to support your family," said 45-year-old Steve Mills. "Even though we're not catching crab, the bills still pile up."

Last spring, federal regulators for the first time canceled the West Coast's commercial salmon season after a near-record low number of chinook returned to spawn in the rivers of California's Central Valley. Next year's season also could be called off to allow salmon populations to rebound.

Kuwait scraps joint venture with Dow Chemical

KUWAIT CITY (AP)—Kuwait's government on Sunday scrapped a \$17.4 billion joint venture with U.S. petrochemical giant Dow Chemical after criticism from lawmakers that could have led to a political crisis in this small oil-rich state.

The Cabinet, in a statement carried by the state-owned Kuwait News Agency, said the venture, known as K-Dow Petrochemicals, was "very risky" in light of the global financial crisis and low oil prices. The move came just days before the Jan. 1 startup date for the joint venture.

In its statement, the Cabinet said the "limits of the effects" of the meltdown on international companies cannot be forecast. KUNA said the contract was canceled by the Supreme Petroleum Council, the country's

highest oil authority.

Dow Chemical said it was "extremely disappointed" with the Kuwaiti government's decision and was evaluating its options under the joint-venture agreement.

"While disappointed in this outcome, Dow remains committed to its Middle East strategy," the Midland, Michigan-based company said in a brief statement.

The project, in which Kuwait was to hold a \$7.5 billion stake, had been criticized in the country as a waste of public funds, and lawmakers threatened to question the prime minister in parliament if it was launched.

Such a move could have led to Sheik Nasser Al Moham-med Al Sabah's impeachment, sparking a new political row in the country just weeks after the

Cabinet resigned in protest after an effort by a group of Islamist lawmakers to question the premier over corruption allegations within the government.

Sheik Nasser was reappointed to his post though he has yet to form a new Cabinet.

Dow, one of the world's largest chemical companies, and Kuwait's Petrochemical Industries Co., a subsidiary of the Kuwait Petroleum Corp., had hoped the joint venture would help them capture a larger share of the global chemicals market and boost profitability. The company was to be headquartered in the Detroit area.

But the sharp drop in crude oil prices—from mid-July highs of nearly \$150 per barrel to under \$40 currently, has hit Kuwait and its oil-rich Gulf Arab neighbors, hard.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

French Madoff investor lost his, family's funds

PARIS (AP)—Rene-Thierry Magon de la Villehuchet saw his fortune and his loved ones' money disappear along with his clients' when he lost \$1.4 billion he had invested with Bernard Madoff, the French financier's brother said. Magon de la Villehuchet, 65, was found dead at his desk in New York on Tuesday, both of his wrists slashed and a bottle of pills nearby. His brother said Magon de La Villehuchet invested virtually all his own funds, along with money from friends and family, with Madoff, who was arrested Dec. 11 and allegedly told FBI agents he had masterminded a \$50 billion fraud. Magon de la Villehuchet "invested his own fortune," up to several tens of millions of dollars, his brother Bertrand Magon de la Villehuchet told The Associated Press on Friday. "He was totally ruined," and so was his business partner Patrick Littaye, Bertrand said in a telephone interview from his home on Paris' chic Place des Vosges. "At first he thought he'd be able to get the money back. He was very determined. Gradually he realized he wouldn't be able to," Bertrand said. "My brother was a man of simple tastes," Bertrand said. "He was a very modest man."

Chicago's newspapers facing troubled futures

CHICAGO (AP)—A little more than a century ago, Chicago boasted 11 daily English-language newspapers. The fierce competition among them, immortalized in the 1928 play "The Front Page," even turned bloody at times, and that drive to outdo one another led to 35 Pulitzer Prizes, journalism's highest honor. Today, only two major dailies remain in this city of 3

million, and both are in serious trouble from declining circulation, plummeting ad revenue and a new kind of competition that threatens to make newsprint itself obsolete. Suddenly, "Stop the presses!" carries new meaning. Even as the arrest of Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich on federal corruption charges brought the latest and most luscious of scandals to the teeth of the Chicago Tribune and Chicago Sun-Times, questions were swirling about their futures.

Euro currency turns 10; seen as fulfilling promise

FRANKFURT, Germany (AP)—Ten years ago, Europe launched its grand experiment with a shared currency—and watched it plunge in value before recovering. As the anniversary approaches of the Jan. 1, 1999, arrival of the euro, economists say the new currency is finally fulfilling its promise as a way to lower borrowing costs, ease trade and tourism, boost growth and strengthen the European community. And doing it amid a global financial crisis that, for the moment, underlines the safety in numbers that comes from joining one, big currency. "After 10 years it has truly created a zone of security and stability," French Finance Minister Christine Lagarde said in mid-December. "From all these points of view, the euro has in fact proven wrong the forecasts some made against the euro 10 years ago." When it was launched for non-cash purposes in 1999, just 11 countries were on board—Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain. Notes and coins were added on Jan. 1, 2002, and the original 11 have been joined by Cyprus, Greece, Malta and Slovenia, with Slovakia slated to join on Jan. 1, bringing the total to 16.

Nation

Obama adviser: Slowing economy won't halt tax cuts

WASHINGTON (AP)—A top adviser to President-elect Barack Obama said Sunday that the country's slowing economy won't keep the new administration from fulfilling its plans for a middle-class tax cut.

"We feel it's important that middle-class people get some relief now," Obama adviser David Axelrod said.

Middle-class tax cuts will be part of the new administration's stimulus plan, Axelrod said. "This package will in-

clude a portion of that tax cut that will become part of the permanent tax cut that he'll have in his upcoming budget," Axelrod said.

The incoming administration is considering tax cuts of \$1,000 for couples and \$500 for individuals that will be delivered by reducing the tax withheld from paychecks. That plan has been estimated to cost about \$140 billion over 2009-2010.

The lump-sum rebates issued ear-

lier this year were used by many people to pay down debt, rather than spending the money and boosting the economy as the administration had hoped.

"People need money in their pockets to spend," Axelrod said. "That'll get our economy going again."

Congress should have a new stimulus plan ready for the new president to sign as soon as possible, Axelrod said.



Obama

He placed the cost of a planned Obama stimulus package at "\$675 billion to \$775 billion" but said "those numbers are not fixed."

"Obviously, the sooner the better. I don't think Americans can wait," he said. "People are suffering, our economy is sliding, and we need to act. And so our message to Congress is to work on it with all deliberate speed."

The slowing economy also means that it's more important than ever to eliminate President George W. Bush's tax cuts, Axelrod said. "It's something we plainly can't afford moving forward," he said. "Whether it expires or we repeal it a little bit early we'll determine later but it's going to go. It has to go."

Eliminating Bush's tax cuts while adding in new middle-class tax cuts doesn't mean that Obama is raising taxes, Axelrod argued.

Blagojevich lawyer to submit Obama report to panel

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. (AP)—The lead attorney for Gov. Rod Blagojevich said he plans to submit President-elect Barack Obama's internal report on contacts with the scandal-plagued governor to the Illinois House committee weighing impeachment.

Attorney Ed Genson told the Chicago Sun-Times on Sunday the report would support Blagojevich's claims that he hasn't done anything wrong in his handling of Obama's vacant U.S. Senate seat.

Earlier in the week, Obama released the internal report supporting his insistence that there had been no inappropriate contact with the governor's office by Obama or his staff.

State Rep. Barbara Flynn Currie, chairwoman of the committee, said Sunday that Genson's request to submit the report would probably be approved. But she expressed skepticism that the report would prove the governor's innocence.

"Maybe in this particular instance someone didn't run a stop sign, but it

doesn't say they didn't run a different stop sign," she said.

The House panel is scheduled to meet Monday.

Genson's move comes after the committee rejected his request to subpoena incoming Obama chief of staff Rahm Emanuel and senior adviser Valerie Jarrett, whose testimony he said would also bolster Blagojevich's claims of innocence.

"Since I can't subpoena anyone, this is the next best thing," Genson said.

The panel rejected his subpoena request after U.S. Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald said testimony from Emanuel and others would interfere with his investigation.

Currie said Fitzgerald has not yet responded to the committee's request to access wiretap recordings used to build the case against Blagojevich.

"They understand this is urgent," Currie said of the U.S. attorney's office, "so I suspect we'll hear from them very soon."

High wind knocks out power to 413,000 in Mich.

DETROIT (AP)—Wind gusting more than 60 mph knocked out power to about 413,000 Michigan homes and businesses on Sunday as temperatures dipped back into the 20s and 30s.

Meanwhile, flood warnings were posted throughout the Midwest as tem-

peratures rose after a week of heavy snowfall. Forecasters said flooding was possible in areas of Wisconsin, Ohio, Iowa, Michigan and Indiana.

In Michigan, high wind knocked down tree limbs and power lines. Parts of the state also got about 4 inches of snow.



With one light pole already down a second teeters on Woodward Ave in Detroit Sunday Dec. 28, 2008.

"We've had an intensifying storm system track northeast through the state," said Mark Sekelsky, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Grand Rapids. "As that storm intensified, it brought the winds."

Detroit-based DTE Energy Co. said about 230,000 lost power Sunday, mostly in Wayne and Oakland counties. Crews were working, but spokesman Scott Simons said 10 percent of the 155,000 customers blacked out Sunday night would have to remain without power into Thursday. "We're still assessing," Singer said. CMS Energy Corp. subsidiary Consumers Energy said about 183,000 of its customers lost power because of the winds and 91,000 remained blacked out Sunday night. Consumers said it couldn't predict when power might be restored because the winds continued. Crews from Tennessee, Kentucky, Illinois, Indiana and Ohio aided Michigan's power restoration efforts.

Strong winds also gusted across upstate New York, reaching 75 mph in the Buffalo area and toppling some power poles and trees. Nearly 16,000 customers were without power in five western and northern counties. In New York City, residents relaxed as temperatures reached the mid-60s Sunday.

Melting snow and ice caused problems in the Midwest. In southeastern Wisconsin, the National Weather Service predicted the Fox River would crest about a foot over flood stage Tuesday in the town of Wheatland.

Flooding along U.S. 31 in Holland, Mich., forced Amtrak to cancel a train from Chicago to Grand Rapids on Saturday night, and at least 300 passengers were taken to buses to complete their trips, WZZM-TV reported.

ACROSS THE NATION

TVA head pledges to test wells near coal ash spill

KINGSTON, Tenn. (AP)—The CEO and president of the nation's largest public utility promised Sunday to address the health and safety concerns of a community near a major coal ash spill in eastern Tennessee. Tom Kilgore, who heads the Tennessee Valley Authority, said the utility will pay to test local wells for contamination and would start air quality testing. Kilgore spoke to between 200 and 300 residents who gathered Sunday to get answers about the environmental and economic impact of Monday's spill. "This is not a time when TVA holds its head high," Kilgore said. "I'm here to say we are going to clean it up and we are going to clean it up right." More than a billion gallons of coal fly ash, a byproduct of burning coal, spilled Monday when the dike burst on a retention pond at the Kingston Fossil Plant. The spill covered 300 acres with sludge in Harri-man, about 35 miles west of Knoxville. It dumped a mix of ash and water in the Emory River, causing residents of nearby Kingston to worry about their drinking water.

Avalanche kills skier at Wyoming ski resort

JACKSON, Wyo. (AP)—An avalanche has killed a skier at a Wyoming ski resort. Jackson Hole Mountain Resort spokeswoman Anna Olson says David Nodine, of Wilson, was skiing down an expert trail with a companion

Saturday when the avalanche buried him under 8 feet of snow. The companion was not injured. Olson says ski patrollers found Nodine within six minutes but could not revive him. The 31-year-old was pronounced dead at a clinic at the resort base. Olson says ski patrol had taken precautions to reduce avalanche danger in the area. At least six people have died in U.S. avalanches this ski season, including 38-year-old firefighter Brian Kopp and 19-year-old Mark Goetz. They died Saturday in Colorado while snowmobiling.

Sen. Craig restroom tanking as tourist destination

BOISE, Idaho (AP)—The men's room at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport where Republican Sen. Larry Craig was arrested in a sex sting is losing its appeal as a tourist stop, an official said. "We're getting there," said Patrick Hogan, director of public affairs for the Metropolitan Airports Commission. "I think we'll all be glad when there's no special interest in that restroom." Craig was accused of soliciting sex in the bathroom in June 2007 and pleaded guilty to disorderly conduct in August 2007. One person had offered to buy the restroom stall for \$5,000, Hogan said, but airport officials "don't sell fixtures for novelty purposes." Though tourist interest has withered, the surge of publicity from Craig's arrest helped end the type of activity in the restroom that had prompted lewd-conduct complaints, he said.

Study: Murders among black youths on rise

WASHINGTON (AP)—The number of young black men and teenagers who either killed or were killed in shootings has risen at an alarming rate since 2000, a new study shows.

The study, to be released Monday by criminologists at Northeastern University in Boston, comes as FBI data is showing that murders have leveled off nationwide.

Not so for black teens, the youngest of whom saw dramatic increases in shooting deaths, the Northeastern report concluded.

Last year, for example, 426 black males between the ages of 14 and 17 were killed in gun crimes, the study shows. That marked a 40 percent in-

crease from 2000.

Similarly, an estimated 964 in the same age group committed fatal shootings in 2007 - a 38 percent increase from seven years earlier. The number of offenders is estimated because not all crimes are reported, said Northeastern criminologist James Alan Fox, who co-authored the study.

"Although the overall rate of homicide in the United States remains relatively low, the landscape is quite different for countless Americans living, and some dying, in violence-infested neighborhoods," Fox said.

Seizing on President-elect Barack Obama's incoming administration as an opportunity for more funding,

Fox added: "There is an urgency for reinvestment in children and families. In essence, we need a bailout for kids at risk."

Obama will be the nation's first black president.

The study partly blamed Bush administration grant cuts to local police and juvenile crime prevention programs for the surge in crimes by young black men and teens. Incoming Vice President Joe Biden has promised funding to put 50,000 new police officers on the street to help bring violent crime rates back to a decade-long annual decline that began in the mid-1990s, after then-President Bill Clinton provided local officials with money to hire 100,000 new cops.

Asia

Pro-Thaksin protesters ring Thai Parliament



Supporters of exiled former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra gather Sunday, Dec. 28, 2008, near the Royal Palace in Bangkok to listen to speeches. AP

BANGKOK, Thailand (AP)—Thousands of supporters of exiled former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra surrounded Thailand's Parliament on Monday, daring lawmakers to pass through their ranks to deliver a speech outlining the new government's key policies.

With only a handful of opposition lawmakers entering the building, the morning opening of the legislature was postponed.

"If they (lawmakers) want to go in, they have to walk through

us, including the prime minister," one of the protest leaders, Chatuporn Prompan, told reporters outside the Parliament compound where demonstrators spent the night.

The demonstration sparked fears of renewed political turbulence, which paralyzed the previous government for months and climaxed with an eight-day seizure of Bangkok's airports. But the earlier protesters had been part of an anti-Thaksin alliance.

The current protest group—which calls itself the Democratic Alliance against Dictatorship—said it would stay at Parliament until the government calls a new general election. The group had previously planned to stay for three days.

"We will celebrate New Year at Parliament," Chatuporn said.

The alliance has at least temporarily disrupted the government's plan to announce its policies, which by law it must do by Jan. 7.

Bangladeshis vote for 1st time in 7 years

DHAKA, Bangladesh (AP)—Bangladeshis formed long lines at polling stations even before voting began Monday to choose a new prime minister and restore democracy after two years of emergency rule in the country's first election in seven years.

Authorities deployed 650,000 security forces across the country to prevent violence and vote fraud in the election, seen as crucial to restoring democracy in Muslim-majority Bangladesh, which has a history of military rule and political unrest.

But both of the leading candidates—former prime minis-

ters Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina—are facing corruption charges and many fear the election won't bring the reform the impoverished country of 150 million desperately needs. The two have traded power back and forth for 15 years in successive governments marked by corruption, mismanagement and paralyzing protests.

S.A. Quader, a 57-year-old businessman, was among about 500 voters who arrived a polling station in the capital's northern Uttara district at least an hour before it opened.

"I'm here to choose the right

person to lead our country," Quader said. "I'm confident the election will be free and fair."

There were concerns that the polls might degenerate into violence as the last attempt at elections in 2007 did. That vote was preceded by weeks of deadly rioting between the Zia and Hasina's rival parties that prompted the military to cancel the election and declare emergency rule.

Clashes broke out Saturday between supporters of the candidates, leaving 85 people injured in three different districts, the United News of Bangladesh reported, quoting police and witnesses.

China sets stricter school construction standards

BEIJING (AP)—China's top legislature has set stricter construction standards for schools after thousands of poorly built classrooms collapsed in May's massive earthquake, killing many students, state media reported. The new law passed by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress says that all schools must now be built to higher earthquake standards than other public buildings, Xinhua News Agency reported late Saturday. School safety has become a major concern in China after May's 7.9-magnitude quake killed nearly 70,000 people in Sichuan province and brought down 7,000 schools. Often schools were the only buildings in the area to fully collapse. The new law—which takes effect next May—also requires schools to teach students about earthquake safety and response, Xinhua said. The report did not say what penalties would be imposed if the laws were broken.

World

Israeli troops mobilize as Gaza assault widens

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip (AP)—Israel widened its deadliest-ever air offensive against Gaza's Hamas rulers Sunday, pounding smuggling tunnels and a central prison, sending more tanks and artillery toward the Gaza border and approving a reserves callup for a possible ground invasion.

Israeli leaders said they would press ahead with the Gaza campaign, despite enraged protests across the Arab world and Syria's decision to break off indirect peace talks with the Jewish state. Israel's foreign minister said the goal was to halt Gaza rocket fire on Israel for good, but not to re-occupy the territory.

With the two-day death toll climbing above 290 Sunday, crowds of Gazans breached the border wall with Egypt to es-

cape the chaos. Egyptian forces, some firing in the air, tried to push them back into Gaza and an official said one border guard was killed.

Hamas, in turn, fired rockets deeper than ever into Israel, near the Israeli port city of Ashdod.

Yet Hamas leaders were forced into hiding, most of the dead were from the Hamas security forces, and Israel's military intelligence chief said Hamas' ability to fire rockets had been reduced by 50 percent. Indeed, Hamas rockets fire dropped off sharply, from more than 130 on Saturday to just over 20 on Sunday. Still, Hamas continues to command some 20,000 fighters.

Israel's intense bombings—some 300 air strikes since midday Saturday—wreaked

unprecedented destruction in Gaza, reducing entire buildings to rubble.

Shlomo Brom, a former senior Israeli military official, said it was the deadliest force ever used in decades of Israeli-Palestinian fighting. "Since Hamas took over Gaza (in June 2007), it has become a war between two states, and in war between states, more force is used," he said.

European leaders called on both Israel and Hamas to end the bloodshed.

French President Nicolas Sarkozy spoke Sunday with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, who leads a rival government to Hamas in the West Bank, and condemned "the provocations that led to this situation as well as the disproportionate use of force."

Guinea coup leaders demote all generals

CONAKRY, Guinea (AP)—Coup leaders in Guinea issued a declaration on state radio Sunday saying all military generals of the former regime had been demoted, raising the specter of instability in the country.

The demotions included more than 20 military heads, including those who ran the country's army, navy and air force. The list also includes security force chiefs.

Coup spokesman Nhouhou Thiam said the demotions were effective immediately and added that the military heads of the regime under longtime dictator Lansana Conte would be reassigned to other jobs in the army.

The move comes amid questions about whether coup leader Capt. Moussa Camara

is able to control the plethora of military units created under Conte's 24-year rule. Camara's group seized public airwaves and declared a coup Tuesday just hours after Conte's death.

Camara's junta appears to be largely in control of Guinea, broadcasting on public airwaves, holding news conferences and meeting with foreign diplomats.

But experts note that Guinea's military units are heavily armed and headquartered in different parts of the country, separated by bad roads and unreliable cell phone service. Since Conte's death, the battalions are no longer under any central command and they could be centers for unrest, experts warn.

Another unknown is the status of the elite presidential guard. It was fiercely loyal to Conte and is accused of executing dozens of demonstrators during massive protests against the regime two years ago.

Earlier Sunday, soldiers loyal to Guinea's coup leader surrounded the residence of a high-ranking military officer who served under Conte and searched his house for weapons.

Inspector Mamady Toure, a member of the junta, said the coup leaders had received information that necessitated the search of Gen. Ibrahima Diallo's house Sunday. Asked if it involved a possible countercoup by regime loyalists, he said: "I will let you know as soon as I know."

WORLD BRIEFS

Key Somali official says president to quit Monday

MOGADISHU, Somalia (AP)—Somalia's president will resign Monday to try to end government infighting before the country's Ethiopian allies leave, a senior ally said Sunday in the latest in a series of conflicting statements on the leader's future. President Abdullahi Yusuf will address a special session of the country's parliament to announce his retirement from politics, said Abdirashid Sed, a confidant of Yusuf and the most senior figure to comment so far on the president's plans. "He decided to step down because he does not want to be seen as an obstacle to peace in Somalia," Sed told The Associated Press. "He wants to give a chance to the younger generation." The announcement came as 19 people died in clashes in the Horn of Africa nation that has been ravaged by 18 years of civil war.

Swiss nuclear smuggling suspect freed from prison

GENEVA (AP)—A Swiss man suspected of involvement in the world's biggest nuclear smuggling ring has been released from prison after more than four years of investigative detention, his family said Sunday. Urs Tinner, 43, was freed several days ago, his mother Hedwig Tinner told The Associated Press by telephone from eastern Switzerland. His brother Marco Tinner, 40, remains in detention while prosecutors appeal his release to the federal criminal court in Bellinzona, she said, refusing to comment further on the case.

The family's information was confirmed by an official in a position to know about the case who spoke on condition of anonymity because of confidentiality rules. The Swiss Supreme Court had rejected previous requests for their release but told investigators in August to consider—"within months"—whether to set Urs and Marco Tinner free pending a possible trial.

Belgian king designates new prime minister

BRUSSELS, Belgium (AP)—King Albert on Sunday asked Belgium's parliament president to take the reins of the government that quit last week after a scandal over the botched bailout of the Fortis bank. Herman Van Rompuy, 61, is expected to replace Yves Leterme at the head of a quarrelsome alliance of Christian Democrats, Liberals and Socialists in a matter of days. The king named him prime minister-designate at the suggestion of ex-premier Wilfried Martens, who spent six days sounding out political leaders on how to quickly form a new government. Van Rompuy is to discuss policy issues with leaders of the five coalition parties in the coming days before the king formally swears his government into office. Considered a colorless but reliable leader, Van Rompuy is seen as providing a steady hand on the wheel after 18 months of squabbling among the Dutch and French-speaking coalition partners under Leterme. Van Rompuy is a Dutch-speaking Christian Democrat.

ASIAN BRIEFS

Pakistan: Marriott reopens as bomber kills 34

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan (AP)—A suicide bomber pretending to need help with his car killed 34 people in northwest Pakistan on Sunday while the target of another recent attack, the Marriott in Islamabad, partially reopened three months after a brazen truck bombing at the luxury hotel left 54 dead. The Marriott building was badly damaged by the September blast—blamed on a Pakistani militant group accused of killing U.S. journalist Daniel Pearl in 2002—but renovations, a security overhaul and the addition of a giant bombproof wall meant the hotel was ready to welcome guests again, the owner said. "We have expressed our resolve that we will not bow before the enemies of Pakistan," said owner Saddaruddin Hashwani. The suicide attack on Sunday, at a polling station close to the Swat Valley, comes amid concern that extremist violence is set to spike now that Pakistan is shifting troops away from the region toward India.

Overdrive

2009 INFINITI M35-S

A luxury sedan that's a bona fide hell-raiser

By **WARREN BROWN**
THE WASHINGTON POST

There's nothing like a recession to make you appreciate a luxury automobile, especially one that comes fully equipped with apparent virtue.

Consider the 2009 Infiniti M35-S, tweaked slightly for the new model year.

The front end has been freshened. It now has the gravitas of a luxury sedan affordable by prosperously, responsibly employed adults. Interior materials are discernibly better in terms of quality and installation. To put it simply, the M35, now in production for four years, finally feels less Nissan and more Infiniti.

That is a good thing. Luxury should offer more than a prestige automotive badge and a higher price tag. At the very least, it should provide an opportunity to escape daily distemper, especially during this time of falling stock values, troubled banks and uncertain employment prospects.

Buying a luxury car in this environment is not a practical thing to do precisely because practicality is not what's needed by people who can afford more. If you can spend the money, you need something uplifting, something that will heighten your spirits and lower your misery index. You need the M35-S.

It is styled nicely enough to signify status. Yet, there is nothing gaudy, ostentatious or offensive about it.

It looks so wonderfully rich and respectable. But it's a bona fide hell-raiser, now equipped with a 303-horsepower V-6 instead of the acceptable but less rambunctious 275-horsepower V-6 installed in predecessor M35 cars.

Nissan, Infiniti's corporate parent, worked some technical magic to boost the M35's power and improve its fuel economy, moving the latter up from 16 miles per gallon to 17 mpg in the city and from 23 mpg to 25 mpg on the highway.



The 2009 Infiniti M35-S, tweaked slightly for the new model year.

Critics of such technical wizardry argue that it might be better used to simply yield more fuel economy, as opposed to substantially improving horsepower and only slightly upping fuel economy. Intellectually, I agree. But what's the fun in that?

The new M35 seeks to strike a compromise, or at least the appearance of one. That's good enough for people who care as much about fun per mile as they do about miles per gallon. What can I say? I'm conflicted.

And let's face it. The economy doesn't help. The drumbeat of bad financial news makes you yearn for something good, something that will make you laugh and smile and think that things will somehow get back to what we once thought normal.

What better way to enjoy that delusion than to climb behind the wheel of a visually respectable hot-rod and go for a long run, burning premium unleaded gasoline at a price

that now hovers around \$2 a gallon? It almost rekindles your faith in Wall Street, American big business and the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries. It makes you feel that somebody is listening. Varrrooommm! We're coming back. Yeah, daddy!

The feeling doesn't last long. The M35's optional Bose 5.1 Studio Surround Sound system, equipped with 14 speakers, is tuned to a public radio station—my way of remaining connected to the real world while driving fantasy machines, such as this car. A newscaster is telling me that the cheap gasoline I just bought is priced to accommodate a global economy rapidly going to hell. But I resolve to remain unperturbed, to enjoy the moment. There will be time enough to fret over frozen credit, plummeting car sales, failing banks and global warming. Right now, I just want to drive and enjoy this car and believe in the possibility of a happier tomorrow.

NUTS & BOLTS

By **WARREN BROWN**
THE WASHINGTON POST

COMPLAINTS

The critics are right. Nissan could have put more effort into improving the fuel economy of the new M35. That cheap gasoline isn't going to last forever.

RIDE, ACCELERATION AND HANDLING

This is pure joy.

HEAD-TURNING QUOTIENT

It looks rich without inspiring envy or other antisocial emotions. There is joy in the external sculpture of this car. It speaks to fun.

BODY STYLE/LAYOUT

The M35 is a front-engine, midsize, four-door, entry-level luxury sedan available with rear-wheel-drive or all-wheel-drive. It is more sporting than family hauler in attitude.

ENGINE/TRANSMISSION

The new M35 comes with a 3.5-liter, 24-valve V-6 that develops 303 horsepower at 6,800 revolutions per minute and 262 foot-pounds of torque at 4,800 rpm. The engine is mated to a seven-speed transmission—that's right, seven-speed—which can be shifted automatically or manually.

CAPACITIES

There are seats for five people. Maximum cargo capacity is 15 cubic

feet. The fuel tank holds 20 gallons of premium unleaded gasoline—recommended for best performance, but not required for satisfactory operation.

REAL-WORLD MILEAGE

My associate, Ria Manglapus, and I keep dumping fuel in congested traffic. Our city mileage in the M35 barely tallied 14 miles per gallon. But we did get 25 mpg on the highway.

SAFETY

Standard equipment includes front and rear ventilated disc brakes with antilock protection; side and head air bags; and electronic stability and traction control.

PRICE

The base price for the 2009 M35 is \$45,800. Dealer's invoice price on that model is \$42,286. Price as tested is \$54,415, including \$7,800 in options (such as active rear-wheel steering; onboard navigation with backup camera; lane-departure warning system; and 9.3-gigabyte hard drive to accommodate MP3 player and iPod) and an \$815 destination charge. Dealer's price as tested is \$49,855. Prices were sourced from Infiniti and Edmunds.com.

PURSE-STRINGS NOTE

The new M35 is one of the most enjoyable automotive escape pods available. Compare with Acura TL, Audi A4, Cadillac CTS, Hyundai Genesis, Mercedes-Benz C-Class and Lexus ES 350.

Navigating Washington during Obama's inauguration

By **LENA H. SUN and ERIC M. WEISS**
(C) 2008, THE WASHINGTON POST

WASHINGTON—Washington area officials estimate that 2 million to 4 million people will try to attend the inauguration of President-elect Barack Obama on Jan. 20. Information about getting to Washington and getting around:

AIRLINES

Tickets were still available as of late last week.

US Airways is adding 27 flights into the area's three main airports Jan. 17 and 18 and 16 departing flights Jan. 20 and 21.

Southwest has added 26 flights to Washington Dulles International and Baltimore-Washington International Marshall airports.

United is adding nine flights and flying larger planes for 35 flights.

AIRPORT PARKING

Allow extra time. Reagan National

Airport travelers can check live parking conditions at www.metwashairports.com. BWI spokesman Jonathan Dean said he doesn't expect many inaugural visitors to use regular airport parking lots, because the BWI rail station has 3,200 spots.

ROADS

Roads will be closed Jan. 20 within a still-to-be-determined security cordon near the Mall and Capitol. Bridges across the Potomac River and certain major roads into downtown Washington will be restricted to buses and authorized vehicles.

PARKING

Meter fees and parking regulations in Washington will be suspended for the day. Garages outside the security boundary can open at their owners' discretion; those inside will be closed.

TAXIS

It is unclear how many or where cabs

will be available until security officials disclose how much of downtown will be blocked off.

AMTRAK

Amtrak is adding service between Boston and Washington based on reservations. Some cars with sleeping berths were nearly sold out.

METRO

Metro rail will operate rush-hour service for 15 hours Jan. 20 (4 a.m. to 7 p.m.) and will stay open for an extra two hours (until 2 a.m.). It will also offer free parking at its lots. Capacity is 120,000 people an hour, in the best-case scenario. Officials urge riders to spread out their trips, especially after the main events, by going to restaurants, movies or museums. Riders are also encouraged to pay fares in advance, such as by using the commemorative Farecard. For information, visit www.wmata.com.

Metro officials say that people who

live or are staying within two miles of the Mall should walk. That includes an area bordered roughly by the Metro stations of Woodley Park-Zoo/Adams Morgan, Rosslyn, Arlington Cemetery, Navy Yard, Stadium-Armory and Rhode Island Avenue-Brentwood.

COMMUTER RAIL AND BUS

MARC and Virginia Railway Express commuter rail and Maryland commuter buses plan to run special service Jan. 20. Together, they will be able to carry about 50,000 people that day. The trains will arrive at Union Station; the commuter buses will travel from park-and-ride spots to Metro stations on the region's fringe.

MARC and VRE tickets for the day must be bought in advance. Bus fares can be bought Inauguration Day.

VRE tickets go on sale Tuesday; forms can be found at www.vre.org.

MARC tickets will be sold between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. Saturday at the Cam-

den and Monocacy MARC stations; only cash will be accepted. Riders can also visit www.commuterdirect.com or call 703-228-7433.

CHARTER BUSES

About 10,000 charter buses are expected in the Washington area. Washington has found parking for 5,000 and is working out how to get people to and from events. For information about charter bus permits, visit www.dc.gov. Charter bus companies can register for parking at 2009inauguration.clickandpark.com.

About 4,700 buses will probably park at Metrorail-accessible locations, including RFK Stadium and Metrorail parking lots.

BICYCLES

Bicycles will not be allowed within the security cordon. Bicycle valet parking might be set up in areas just outside the cordon. Metro officials have not decided whether to allow bikes on trains.

Life & Style

Christmas parties around the island

**DFS HOLDS UN-THEMED PARTY**

Far left, the staff of DFS pose for a picture while dancing during their Christmas party held at the Hard Rock Café on Dec. 20, 2008.

REY BELGADO

Left, the men of DFS pose for a souvenir shot during the Christmas party held at the Hard Rock Café on Dec. 20, 2008.

REY BELGADO

Right, the DFS staff portray different countries during the United Nations-themed Christmas party held at the Hard Rock Café.

REY BELGADO

Far right, Gemma Good, Jojo, Celine and staff members have their picture taken with the Christmas tree at the Hard Rock Café.

REY BELGADO

**SHIMANOKURA CHRISTMAS PARTY**

Shimanokura president Atsushi Nakadai and general manager Tomomichi Kasai flank Karina during the company's Christmas party at the Hyatt Regency Saipan on Dec. 14, 2008.



REY BELGADO

LAOLAO BAY GOLF RESORT CHRISTMAS PARTY

The staff, officers, and management team of the Laolao Bay Golf Resort celebrate their annual employees' Christmas party at the Laolao Bay Resort on Dec. 22, 2008.

REY BELGADO

Atsushi Nakadai, president of Shimanokura, and general manager Tomomichi Kasai pose with company staff Karina, Celia, Alex, Vilma, Jona, and Dan during the Christmas party at the Hyatt Regency Saipan on Dec. 14, 2008.

Pols prize late-night and comedy show appearances



AP
This Aug. 22, 2007, file photo shows then Democratic presidential hopeful, and now president-elect Barack Obama, being greeted by host Jon Stewart during an appearance on Comedy Central's "The Daily Show With Jon Stewart" in New York.

NEW YORK (AP)—It proved to be more than a joke when David Letterman said in late September that "the road to the White House runs through me."

Presidential candidates found late-night comedy shows a particularly valuable asset during the 2008 campaign, mak-

ing more than four times the number of on-set appearances with Letterman, Jay Leno, Jon Stewart and the crowd than the 2004 contenders did, some new research has found.

"Candidates have figured out that you can reach voters through entertainment venues

Sculptor Robert Graham, 70

SANTA MONICA, Calif. (AP)—Sculptor Robert Graham, whose massive bronze works mark civic monuments across America, including the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial in Washington, has died at 70.

Graham, who had been ailing, died Saturday at the Santa Monica UCLA Medical Center and Orthopaedic Hospital with his family at his side, including his wife, Academy Award-winning actress Anjelica Huston, the governor's office confirmed.

"Robert was an amazing sculptor who forever shaped the presence of sculpture art throughout California and the world. His work was truly influential and he will forever remain an icon in this state," Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger said in a statement. He said he and his wife, Maria Shriver, were deeply saddened by Graham's death.

In Washington, Graham's bronze sculptures mark the Roosevelt memorial, where bronze panels symbolize the 54 social programs that were initiated under the president's New Deal. Graham also created the life-size, bronze figure of President Roosevelt in his wheelchair at the entrance of the memorial.

In Detroit, Graham's Joe Louis Memorial honors the boxer

with a 24-foot bronze monument in the shape of a massive fist and forearm suspended from a pyramid structure.

His 18-foot monument to jazz great Charlie Parker, depicting the musician's head above the words "Bird Lives," is in Kansas City, Mo.

In New York City's Central Park, Graham's Duke Ellington Memorial stands 30 feet high, with three columns topped with the muses holding up an 8-foot figure of the musician next to a piano.

Graham designed a number of prominent works in Los Angeles, including the "Great Bronze Doors" of the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels. The 25-ton entryway was completed over 5 years by about 150 artists.

Another work in Los Angeles is "Olympic Gateway," comprising the headless figures of a musclebound man and a woman. It marks the entryway to the Memorial Coliseum, where the 1984 Olympics were held.

Earlier this month, Graham was inducted into the California Museum's California Hall of Fame.

Graham, born in Mexico City in 1938, was educated at San Jose State College and the San Francisco Art Institute.

even better than news," said Robert Lichter, a George Mason University professor and head of the Center for Media and Public Affairs.

Candidates made 110 appearances on the late-night shows, up from 25 in 2004, the center said. Fifty this time came before a primary vote was even cast, as a full complement of candidates in both parties looked for ways to get their faces in front of cameras—something President Bush didn't have to worry about four years ago.

There's a rich history of candidates using entertainment venues to show voters they can laugh at themselves: Richard Nixon went on "Rowan & Martin's Laugh-in" in 1968, and Bill Clinton played the sax on "The Arsenio

Hall Show" in 1992. Yet it wasn't until 2008 that the appearances began to seem routine.

Republican John McCain made 17 such guest shots on venues that relentlessly made him the butt of jokes, although one appearance he canceled—with Letterman—may be remembered longer than any of them. President-elect Barack Obama had 15 appearances, third behind Republican Mike Huckabee, who now has a talk show of his own on Fox News Channel.

For the shows, it was a way to tap into a campaign that was a television hit from start to finish. Leno had 22 candidate appearances, while Stewart had 21, Letterman had 19 and Stephen Colbert had 15.

Not only does a candidate

have the chance to display a sense of humor to the late-night crowd, a good exchange could be magnified with endless repeats on YouTube or cable news networks the next day.

The shows also give the candidates a venue to talk directly to voters than they might otherwise get. In 2000, candidate George Bush had more time to talk in one appearance with Letterman than he had during a full month on the "CBS Evening News," Lichter said.

And who wants to deal with pesky journalists, who always want to knock you off message?

"It's a lot more risky, as Sarah Palin will attest, to do an interview with Katie Couric than it is with Jay Leno," said Howard Wolfson, a veteran campaign strategist and

former Hillary Clinton adviser.

They aren't always puffball appearances, though. Letterman, in particular, has become a particularly sharp interviewer. When McCain backed off an appearance citing the economic crisis—then did an interview with Couric later that day—Letterman wouldn't let him forget it until McCain came back and pleaded for forgiveness. At a crucial time, Letterman was repeatedly reminding viewers of McCain's brief campaign suspension, a period the candidate would rather voters have forgotten, Lichter said.

His running mate stayed away from the talk shows but made one memorable appearance on "Saturday Night Live," getting in on some jokes about her.

DEATH & FUNERAL ANNOUNCEMENT

Ricardo Edward Sablan Santos

"Rick Chungi"

Of Papago, Saipan passed away in the grace of our Lord on Thursday
December 25, 2008 at the age of 55

Pre-deceased by his:

Father: Antonio Naputi Santos
Mother: Rosario Sablan Santos
Sister: Rosaline Santos Camacho
Paternal Grandparents: Jesus Ada & Francisca Naputi Santos
Maternal Grandparents: Jose SN & Rosa SN Sablan
Mother/Father In-Law: Jose Fausto & Rosa Quidichai Arriola
Sister/Brother In-Law: Maria E. Omar, Juan Quidachai, Rita Terlaje

Survived by his:

Wife: Dolores Arriola Santos
Children: Richard Fejeran Santos (Cheryl Mo'Ika)
Robert Fejeran Santos
Ray Fejeran Santos
Renee Sharlene Fejeran Santos
Reynold Fejeran Santos
Reared Son: Timmy Canaveral/Runet DLReyes (Lorna, Jonathan)

Brothers/Sisters & In-Laws:

Henry S/Soledad Santos Julian Reyes/Ellen Avencena (†Rita Terlaje)
Francisca S/Lorenzo A Deleon Guerrero †Maria E/Antonio Omar
Herman S/Belen Santos †Juan/Jesusa Quidachai
Antonio S/Lydia S. Santos Daniel/Monica Evangelista
David S/Virginia A. Santos Adelina A/Michael Abanez
Lillian S/Wilfredo Villagrancia Virginia A/David S. Santos
Norman S. Santos/Rosa A Cabrera Rosario Arriola/Jose Babauta
Albert S/Zerah DLC Santos Jose Arriola/Beatrice Babauta
†Rosalina S/Francisco SN Camacho Pedro/Janet Arriola
Marian S. Santos Frances Arriola
Alicia S. Santos/Alfredo

Reared Sister: Claudia Santos/Melvin Tudela (Regino, Claude, Kaitani, Melvin John)
Reared Brother: Jesus Malus
God Father: Jose Borja Tudela

He is additionally survived by numerous, aunts, cousin, nephews, nieces.

Daily Mass of Intention and the Holy Rosary is being celebrated at San Vicente Church on the following schedule:

12/30/08	Tuesday	6:00 p.m. Mass/6:30 p.m. Rosary
12/31/08	Wednesday	5:00 p.m. Rosary/7:00 p.m. Mass
01/01/09	Thursday	8:00 a.m. Mass/6:00 p.m. Rosary

On Friday, January 02, 2009, his remains will be escorted from Nuestra Senora Dela Paz Memorial Chapel at 7:00 a.m. to Mt. Carmel Cathedral. Responso service will be at 7:30 am followed by the Holy Rosary. Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated at 11:00 a.m. Interment will follow at Chalan Kanoa Cemetery.

**Un Dangulu Na si Yu'us Ma'ase
Ginen I Familia**



Movie crowds adopt 'Marley' with \$37M weekend

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Hollywood had a happy holiday with a huge Christmas weekend as movies from Jennifer Aniston and Owen Wilson, Brad Pitt and Cate Blanchett and Adam Sandler all opened strongly.

Even Tom Cruise scored solidly in an eye patch and a German World War II uniform.

Aniston and Wilson's dog tale "Marley & Me" debuted at No. 1 with \$37 million in weekend ticket sales and a total of \$51.7 million since opening Christmas Day, according to estimates Sunday from distributor 20th Century Fox.

Disney's Sandler comedy "Bedtime Stories" came in second for the weekend with \$28.1 million and \$38.6 million since it debuted on Christmas.

Paramount's "Benjamin Button," a romantic fantasy with

Pitt and Blanchett, ran a close third with \$27 million for the weekend. The film has grossed \$39 million since premiering Christmas Day.

MGM's "Valkyrie," starring Cruise as a German officer plotting to kill Adolf Hitler, had a No. 4 debut weekend of \$21.5 million and took in \$30 million since opening on Christmas.

Rounding out the holiday rush of new wide releases was Lionsgate's action thriller "The Spirit," which came in at No. 9 with \$6.5 million over the weekend and \$10.4 million since its Christmas debut.

"Marley & Me" was based on John Grogan's best-seller about a couple going through the ups and downs of marriage with their mischievous dog in tow. The holiday timing was ideal for a story about an adorable pup, said 20th



In this image released by 20th Century Fox, Owen Wilson and Jennifer Aniston are shown in a scene from, "Marley and Me."

1. "Marley & Me," \$37 million.
2. "Bedtime Stories," \$28.1 million.
3. "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button," \$27 million.
4. "Valkyrie," \$21.5 million.
5. "Yes Man," \$16.5 million.
6. "Seven Pounds," \$13.4 million.
7. "The Tale of Despereaux," \$9.4 million.
8. "The Day the Earth Stood Still," \$7.9 million.
9. "The Spirit," \$6.5 million.
10. "Doubt," \$5.7 million.

AP

Paramount Vantage's "Revolutionary Road," a domestic drama reuniting "Titanic" stars Leonardo DiCaprio and Kate Winslet, had a huge \$192,000 debut in just three theaters, averaging \$64,000 per screen.

Warner Bros. expanded Clint Eastwood's vigilante drama "Gran Torino" to more theaters as the film continues to draw big crowds with \$2.4 million in just 84 cinemas, a per-theater average of \$29,048.

By comparison, "Marley & Me" had a theater average of \$10,632 on 3,480 screens, "Button" had \$9,036 on 2,988 screens and "Valkyrie" averaged \$7,942 on 2,711 screens.

Two Fox Searchlight films, "Slumdog Millionaire" and "The Wrestler," and Universal's "Frost/Nixon" also were among Oscar prospects doing strong business.

"Awards buzz doesn't hurt," said Rob Moore, vice chairman of Paramount, which released "Benjamin Button," featuring Pitt as a man who ages backward. "We always felt it's an incredibly compelling movie and worthy of attention at the end of the year. So far, that has been going very well."

"Benjamin Button," "Doubt" and "Frost/Nixon" lead contenders for the Jan. 11 Golden Globes with five nominations each.

Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at U.S. and Canadian theaters, according to Media By Numbers LLC. Final figures will be released Monday.

Century Fox distribution executive Bert Livingston.

"It's an all-audience picture, ages 8 to 80. That's who's coming," Livingston said. "This is a movie about life, love and family. It's what people want to see now."

Audiences wanted to see pretty much everything over the holiday weekend. Revenues had plunged the previous two weekends, but Hollywood ended the year on a high note as the top 12 movies took in \$182.5 million, up 8 percent from the same weekend in 2007.

"It's a very strong finish to the year," said Paul Dergarabedian,

president of box-office tracker Media By Numbers. "Audiences are really enjoying the movies in the marketplace right now."

For the year, revenues are running a fraction behind the pace of 2007, when the box office hit a record \$9.7 billion. Factoring in higher admission prices, the number of tickets sold is lagging 5 percent behind last year's total, according to Media By Numbers.

"Benjamin Button" and other Academy Awards contenders packed theaters. Miramax's acclaimed drama "Doubt" expanded nationwide after two weekends of limited release, pulling in \$5.7 million to finish at No. 10.

Anger, sadness over fabricated Holocaust story

NEW YORK (AP)—It's the latest story that touched, and betrayed, the world.

"Herman Rosenblat and his wife are the most gentle, loving, beautiful people," literary agent Andrea Hurst said Sunday, anguishing over why she, and so many others, were taken by Rosenblat's story of love born on opposite sides of a barbed-wire fence at a concentration camp.

"I question why I never questioned it. I believed it; it was an incredible, hope-filled story."

On Saturday, Berkley Books canceled Rosenblat's memoir, "Angel at the Fence," after he acknowledged that he and his wife did not meet, as they had said for years, at a sub-camp of Buchenwald, where she allegedly sneaked him apples and bread. The book was supposed to come out in February.

Rosenblat, 79, has been married to the former Roma Radzicky for 50 years, since meeting her on a blind date in New York. In a statement issued Saturday through his agent, he described himself as an advocate of love and tolerance who falsified his past to better spread his message.

"I wanted to bring happiness to people," said Rosenblat, who now lives in the Miami area. "I brought hope to a lot of people. My motivation was to make good in this world."

Rosenblat's believers includ-

ed not only his agent and his publisher, but Oprah Winfrey, film producers, journalists, family members, school children and strangers online who ignored, or didn't know about, the warnings from scholars and skeptics that his story didn't make sense.

Other Holocaust memoirists have devised greater fantasies. Misha Defonseca, author of "Misha: A Memoire of the Holocaust Years," pretended she was a Jewish girl who lived with wolves during the war, when she was actually a non-Jew who lived, without wolves, in Belgium.

Historical records prove Rosenblat was indeed at Buchenwald and other camps.

"How sad that he felt he had to embellish a life of surviving the Holocaust and of being married for half a century," said Holocaust scholar Michael Berenbaum.

The damage is broad. Publishing, the most trusting of industries, has again been burned by a memoir that fact-checking might have prevented. Berkley is an imprint of Penguin Group (USA), which in March pulled Margaret B. Jones' "Love and Consequences" after the author acknowledged she had invented her story of gang life in Los Angeles. Winfrey fell, as she did with James Frey, for a narrative of suffering and redemption better suited for television than for history.

"If I ever take on another

memoir, they're going to have to prove everything, every line," Hurst says. "From now on, I may just stick to basic fiction and nonfiction."

The damage is deep. Scholars and fellow survivors fear that Rosenblat's fabrications will only encourage doubts about the Holocaust.

"I am very worried because many of us speak to thousands of students each year," says Sidney Finkel, a longtime friend of Rosenblat's and a fellow survivor. "We go before audiences. We tell them a story and now some people will question what I experienced."

"This was not Holocaust education but miseducation," Ken Waltzer, director of Jewish Studies at Michigan State University, said in a statement.

"Holocaust experience is not heartwarming, it is heart rending. All this shows something about the broad unwillingness in our culture to confront the difficult knowledge of the Holocaust," Waltzer said. "All the more important then to have real memoirs that tell of real experience in the camps."

Among the fooled, at least the partially fooled, was Berenbaum, former director of the United States Holocaust Research Institute at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington.

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Adam Sandler, Keri Russell
 Comedy, Adventure • Rated PG 13

Synopsis

Hotel handyman Skeeter Bronson's life is changed forever when the bedtime stories he tells his niece and nephew start to mysteriously come true. When he tries to help his family by telling one outlandish tale after another, it's the kids' unexpected contributions that turn all of their lives upside down.



The Curious Case of Benjamin Button

Thurs thru Sat 1:00 4:00 7:00 10:00
 Sun thru Wed 1:00 4:00 7:00
 Thursday 1:00 4:00 7:00 10:00

Brad Pitt, Cate Blanchett
 Drama, Romance • Rated PG 13

Synopsis

Benjamin Button is a man who is born in his eighties and ages backwards: a man, like any of us, who is unable to stop time. From New Orleans at the end of World War I in 1918, into the 21st century, on a journey as unusual as any man's life can be, this is the grand tale of a not so ordinary man and the people and places he discovers along the way, the loves he finds and loses, the joys of life and the sadness of death, and what lasts beyond time.



Marley and Me

Thurs thru Sat 1:25 4:30 7:15 9:55
 Sun thru Wed 1:25 4:30 7:15
 Thursday 1:25 4:30 7:15 9:55

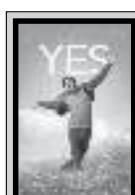
Owen Wilson, Jennifer Aniston
 Comedy, Drama • Rated PG 13



Valkyrie

Thurs thru Sat 1:30 4:25 7:20 9:50
 Sun thru Wed 1:30 4:25 7:20
 Thursday 1:30 4:25 7:20 9:50

Tom Cruise, Bill Nighy
 Thriller, War, Historical • Rated PG 13



Yes Man

Thurs thru Sat 1:05 4:20 7:05 9:35
 Sun thru Wed 1:05 4:20 7:05
 Thursday 1:05 4:20 7:05 9:35

Jim Carrey, Bradley Cooper
 Comedy • Rated PG 13

Synopsis

Carl Allen's life is going nowhere—the operative word being "no"—until he signs up for a self-help program based on one simple covenant: say yes to everything—and anything. Unleashing the power of "YES" begins to transform Carl's life in amazing and unexpected ways, getting him promoted at work and opening the door to a new romance.



The Tale of Despereaux

Thurs thru Sat 1:10 4:15 7:30 9:30
 Sun thru Wed 1:10 4:15 7:30
 Thursday 1:10 4:15 7:30 9:30

Sigourney Weaver, Dustin Hoffman
 Animated, Children • Rated G



Seven Pounds

Thurs thru Sat 1:15 4:10 7:10 9:40
 Sun thru Wed 1:15 4:10 7:10
 Thursday 1:15 4:10 7:10 9:40

Will Smith, Rosario Dawson
 Drama, Romance • Rated PG 13

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BET, TV One plan extensive inauguration coverage

NEW YORK (AP)—BET and TV One, the television networks aimed primarily at a black audience, haven't paid much attention to presidential inaugurations before. This time will be different.

Both are planning extensive coverage for Jan. 20, when Barack Obama is sworn in as the nation's 44th president. While it will be followed as a news event, network executives said the installation of the first black president will be as much a celebration as a story.

"This is an opportunity to be the best we can be," said Stephen Hill, BET's programming chief. "We see this as an opportunity to inform and inspire our audience, which is what we always try to do."

BET marked President George W. Bush's last inauguration with a news brief, to say "Oh, it happened. What a shame," he said.

This time, BET will cover the swearing-in and parade from four locations, including ground and rooftop sites on Pennsylvania Avenue. Anchoring the coverage will be Hill Harper of CBS' "CSI: NY," former CBS "The Early Show" host Rene Syler and Jeff Johnson, who hosts a weekly BET news program.

The networks will take a particular interest in speaking to people who have traveled to Washington to witness the event. On election night, their ratings peaked shortly after the general news networks declared Obama the winner—when black viewers turned to the stations to soak it in with the people on the air.

"They talked about the emotion of it," said Johnathan Rodgers, TV One's president. "Everyone talked about their own relatives and how they grew up. Almost everyone could not believe that it happened in our lifetime."

TV One plans to follow the inauguration for 21 straight hours, from 6 a.m. EST on Jan. 20 to 3 a.m. EST the next day. Radio talk-show host Joe Madison and Art Fennell of CN8, the Comcast Network, will be the hosts. It's already a big week for TV One: Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday the weekend before marks the fifth anniversary of the network's launch.

With all that time on the air, TV One will do its best to give its audience a real flavor of being there, Rodgers said.

"We will show the parade," he said. "We will not overwhelm the parade with a lot of pundits and other stuff."

The connection between King's work and Obama's election will be a major theme for the networks; BET will speak to King's children for their thoughts on Obama and is making a special, "King to Obama: Repurposing the Dream."

Woody Allen jazzes it up at Warsaw concert hall



WARSAW, Poland (AP)—An audience of almost 3,000 clapped and cheered as Woody Allen and his jazz band gave their first ever concert in Poland on Sunday.

The filmmaker, playing the clarinet, was accompanied by his New Orleans Jazz Band for a performance of traditional jazz.

"We will do our best to entertain you," Allen told the audience at Warsaw's biggest concert hall, Sala Kongresowa, at the beginning of the two-hour concert.

Allen's solo parts, as well as those of other band members, were welcomed with applause. He received a standing ovation at the end.

The 73-year-old Academy Award winner rarely performs in large venues or outside New York City, where he lives.

U.S. film director and actor Woody Allen plays clarinet during a concert of his New Orleans Jazz Band in Warsaw Poland, Sunday, Dec. 28, 2008.

AP

Rock songwriter Delaney Bramlett dies in LA at 69

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Singer-songwriter-producer Delaney Bramlett, who penned such classic rock songs as "Let it Rain" and worked with musicians George Harrison and Eric Clapton, has died. He was 69.

Bramlett died Saturday shortly before 5 a.m. at UCLA Ronald Reagan Medical Center in Los Angeles as a result of complications from gallbladder surgery, his wife Susan Lanier-Bramlett said.

Born in Mississippi, Bramlett enjoyed a career in the music business that spanned 50 years. With his then-wife Bonnie

Lynn, he created the Southern blues-rock band Delaney & Bonnie & Friends. The group opened for Blind Faith, which featured British guitarist Clapton, in 1969.

He is perhaps best known for standards such as "Superstar," co-written with Leon Russell, which was recorded by Usher, Luther Vandross, Bette Midler, The Carpenters and most recently, Sonic Youth, in a version featured on the Grammy-nominated soundtrack of the movie "Juno."

He co-wrote "Let it Rain" with Clapton, who also record-

ed it, and "Never Ending Song of Love," which was recorded by more than 100 artists including Ray Charles, George Jones, Tammy Wynette, Patty Loveless and Dwight Yoakam.

During his career, he performed, co-wrote or recorded with stars such as Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, John Lennon, Dave Mason, Billy Preston, the Everly Brothers and Mac Davis. He also produced artists including Etta James and Elvin Bishop.

He recently released an album, "A New Kind of Blues," on independent label Magnolia Gold Records.

'40s femme fatale star Ann Savage dies at 87

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Ann Savage, who earned a cult following as a femme fatale in such 1940s pulp-fiction movies as "Detour," has died at 87.

The actress died in her sleep at a nursing home on Christmas Day from complications following a series of strokes, said her manager, Kent Adamson.

Her Hollywood career had largely been over since the mid-1950s, but she had a resurgence over the past year with a starring role in Canadian cult filmmaker Guy Maddin's "My Winnipeg." Starting with her 1943 debut in the crime story "One Dangerous Night," Savage made more than 30 films through the 1950s, including Westerns ("Saddles and Sagebrush," "Satan's Cradle"), musicals ("Dancing in Manhattan," "Ever Since Venus") and wartime tales ("Passport to Suez," "Two-Man Submarine").

Savage was best-known for director Edgar G. Ulmer's 1945 B-movie "Detour," in which

she played a woman ruthlessly blackmailing a stranger, played by Tom Neal.



She's vicious and predatory. She's been called a harpy from hell, and in the film, too, she's very sexually aggressive, and he's very, very passive. It's very unusual for a '40s film to have a woman come on that strong."

Decades later, "Detour" and Savage gained a cult audience on television and home video.

Adamson said Maddin had been a longtime fan of "Detour." Maddin cast Savage to play his mother in "My Winnipeg," a combination of documentary, drama and personal memoir about his native city in Manitoba.

Savage did some television in the 1950s, including "Death Valley Days" and "The Ford Television Theatre," then left Hollywood for New York City, where she appeared in commercials and industrial films.

In 1986, Savage returned to acting with an appearance in "Fire With Fire," a drama whose cast included Virginia Madsen and D.B. Sweeney.

In this photo provided by Kent Adamson of the Ann Savage Archive, shows a 1940 photo of veteran movie actress Ann Savage.

"It's actually a showcase role," Adamson said. "Neal and Savage really reversed the traditional male-female roles of the time."

Man not sure of his love is not ready for marriage

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
FROM UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

DEAR ABBY: I am a 24-year-old male who has been in a relationship with a great woman, "Hayley," for three years. She has excellent qualities, a good job, she's super loving and would be a wonderful wife someday.



Dear Abby

My family loves Hayley—but my buddies don't, and it is causing me to have mixed feelings. Some days I love her, but on others I want to break up. Then I think of how fantastic our lives would be together. It's weird, because Hayley doesn't change her personality—it's totally my issue. I'm scared that if I break up with her it could be the worst mistake of my life, and I'll regret it.

Please give me some guidance and point me in the right direction to find the love I have for her.

SENSITIVE GUY, MILWAUKEE

DEAR SENSITIVE GUY: Hayley may make a wonderful wife someday, but from your letter, YOU are nowhere near ready for marriage. Mature love doesn't blow hot and cold, and the feelings you finally experience for the woman you marry won't be dictated by the impression she makes on your buddies. If you need me to point you in the right direction to "find" the love you have for Hayley, then I don't think it is there to begin with. And the honorable thing to do is to level with her.

■ ■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: When I was 6, my stepfather molested me repeatedly. He served seven years in prison, got lots of therapy and came out a much better man. I am now 20, and he recently e-mailed me and apologized for everything.

I forgave him a long time ago and let him know. We are now on speaking terms via e-mail only, but my boyfriend, my best friend and my mother all think I'm stupid for forgiving him. Abby, what should I tell these people?

FORGIVING IN SEATTLE

DEAR FORGIVING: Tell them that carrying a load of hatred and resentment toward your abuser was more of a burden than forgiving him. HOWEVER, forgiving your molester doesn't mean that you must have a continuing dialogue with him.

I find it extremely inappropriate that he's trying to insinuate himself into your life now. If you have any intention of allowing it, I urge you to first discuss it with a psychotherapist who specializes in sexual impulse disorders. Although you are no longer a child, one day you might have one. Forewarned is forearmed.

■ ■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: My wife and I are expecting our first child in a few weeks. While we couldn't be more excited, one thing is really eating at me. When discussing what our parents should be called—like "Grandma," "Nanny," "Gramps," etc.—my father-in-law said he wants to be called "Pop."

I think the name "Pop" is for a dad, not a grandfather—like in "a Mom and Pop business." I recommended "Pop-Pop," but they told me that name was already being used in the family.

Other than on this issue, my in-laws and I get along great. I know it seems petty, but are there any grandfathers out there who are called "Pop"? Do you have any suggestions for any other names? Or should I not make a big deal of this?

CALL ME DADDY, PORT JERVIS, N.Y.

DEAR DADDY: Congratulations on your pending paternity, but please don't do too much preplanning regarding the name game. These things have a way of working themselves out, so don't sweat the small stuff. When your little one reaches the talking stage, it's very possible that he or she will call the grandfather by a name that he or she invents.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

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Oh, my! Lions set record for futility at 0-16



GREEN BAY, Wis. (AP)—The silence in the Detroit Lions' locker room was so deafening it drowned out all but the most mundane of sounds.

No laughter, no post-game jokes, certainly no congratulations for a job well done. Just the occasional sound of luggage being zipped up at the close of a hideous season historic for all the wrong reasons.

And really, with derisive chants of "Oh-and-16! Oh-and-16!" still ringing in their ears, was there anything left to say?

"It's over now. We're 0-16," rookie running back Kevin Smith said. "I wish it was just a dream. I wish I could wake up and it'd be over. But it's not."

The Lions didn't even bother trying to put a brave face on this one. With a 31-21 loss to the Green Bay Packers on Sunday, Detroit solidified its claim as the worst team in NFL history. Sixteen games, 16 losses.

"0-16," one sign read, "The Perfect Season."

"You never expect it to happen when you're starting the season," said kicker Jason Hanson, the longest-tenured Lion. "Obviously, what we did here was not good."

It took 16 games to figure that out?

It's been more than 30 years since the Tampa Bay Buccaneers went 0-14 in 1976—and they had the excuse of being an expansion team. The New Orleans Saints during their worst days, the Indianapolis Colts before Peyton Manning arrived, the worst of the New York Jets teams—they all managed to win at least one game.

Not the Lions.

They've been on a downward spiral for most of this decade, done in by one bad personnel move after another by TV analyst-turned-general manager Matt Millen (who drafts a wide receiver in the first round three years running? Better yet, who doesn't get SOMETHING out of three straight first-round picks?). Their efforts on the field weren't much better, stringing together so many losses it looks as if an "L" key got stuck on a keyboard.

But this season was a debacle of epic proportions, beyond even what the most cynical of Lions fans could have imagined.

"As a Lions fan, we're used to them stinking," said Adam Gadsby, one of several Lions fans who made the eight-hour drive from Detroit to watch their team stake its dubious claim to history in person.

"But they've never stunk as well as they're stinking this year."

The 16 losses came to teams good—Tennessee, Indianapolis, Atlanta—and not-so-good—Washington, San Francisco. There were a few close



Detroit Lions' Kevin Smith sits on the bench during the final seconds of the second half of an NFL football game against the Green Bay Packers Sunday, Dec. 28, 2008, in Green Bay, Wis.

calls, and a few losses that were cover-your-eyes ugly. The Lions were outscored 517-268, and twice failed to crack double-digits for points.

One series against the Packers pretty much summed up the entire season. Already trailing 7-0 in the first quarter, the Lions needed a yard for a first down. Dan Orlovsky kept the ball and got the yard, only to have the play waved off because a timeout had been called.

By the Lions.

Smith would get the first down, Detroit's first of the game. But on the very next play, Orlovsky was picked off by Charles Woodson, setting up Green Bay's second touchdown.

Any Given Sunday? The only given with these Lions was a loss.

"We just plain and simple didn't get it done, for whatever reasons," said offensive tackle Jeff Backus, who has had a front-row seat for Detroit's carnage as Millen's first draft pick. "Execution, talent, schemes—at different times it was different things."

"It was just one of those years it all kind of came together."

More like one of those years where everything came apart.

Millen is long gone, fired in September when it became apparent the Lions might make a real run at those '76 Bucs. Coach Rod Marinelli is still around, but who knows for how long? When Donald Driver

torched cornerback Leigh Bodden—the "pickup" in the trade of Shaun Rogers, the Lions' best defender, to Cleveland—for a 71-yard touchdown, Marinelli was seen on the sideline, shaking his head.

"The record speaks for itself," Marinelli said. "We tried hard all year. I felt they gave it their best, I felt I gave it my best. But sometimes your best isn't good enough, and it wasn't good enough this year."

The sting of the losses, not to mention those jeers from the Lambeau Field fans at the end of the game, will be felt for months to come. When the game ended, Smith held onto his gloves and tucked them into his bag, a keepsake to drive him every day this offseason.

But the stain of this dubious record will taint every player on Detroit's roster for the rest of his career. Regardless of what else he does—make the Pro Bowl, win a Super Bowl, even be selected for the Hall of Fame—he will always be part of that Lions team that went 0-16.

Look at the players from the '76 Buccaneers. They haven't set foot on a field in more than two decades, and those cream-sicle uniforms have long since been retired. And here they are, still answering questions about that infamous season.

"It's hard for me to have anybody go through what we went through," said Richard Wood, a hard-hitting linebacker on that

Buccaneers team. "It's a sad moment for all of football when a team can't win a football game. I feel for those guys, because it's a hollow feeling."

But the Lions did this to themselves. OK, so they got some help from Millen, but they were the ones making the plays.

Or not making them, in their case.

"This is us," Hanson said, "we own this."

Chargers 52, Broncos 21

At San Diego, the American Football Conference West belongs to LaDainian Tomlinson, Philip Rivers and the rest of the Chargers after a win over Denver.

They won the NFL's weakest division with an 8-8 record, becoming the first team to go from 4-8 to the playoffs.

Mission Valley turned into Mediocre Valley for the evening as the Chargers became the first

team to win a division at 8-8 since the Cleveland Browns in 1985.

Dolphins 24, Jets 17

At East Rutherford, New Jersey, Chad Pennington walked off the field where he spent his first eight NFL seasons, surrounded by cameras and jubilant teammates after leading the Dolphins to an improbable AFC East title.

On the Jets' sideline, a disappointed Brett Favre jogged off the field and into the locker room, maybe for the last time in a storied career.

Pennington, cut in the offseason by the Jets to make room for Favre, threw two touchdown passes in leading the Dolphins to a division title. A year after going 1-15, the Dolphins completed a remarkable turnaround under first-year coach Tony Sparano, joining the 1999 Indianapolis Colts as the only teams in NFL history to make 10-game improvements.

Vikings 20, Giants 19

At Minneapolis, Ryan Longwell's 50-yard field goal as the game ended lifted the Vikings to the National Football Conference North title for their first postseason appearance in four years. They face Philadelphia next weekend.

David Carr took over at quarterback for Eli Manning after halftime and threw a touchdown pass to Domenik Hixon midway through the third quar-

ter for a 16-10 lead. But New York (12-4), the NFC East winner with home-field advantage throughout the playoffs, was on cruise control from there with a bunch of backups on the field.

Panthers 33, Saints 31

At New Orleans, John Kasay's 42-yard field goal with a second left locked up the NFC South title and the second seed in the conference for the Panthers (12-4).

Carolina, the only team to go 8-0 at home this season, will get a first-round playoff bye and then a chance to extend its perfect record in Charlotte in the divisional round.

Falcons 31, Rams 27

At Atlanta, Jerious Norwood ran for two touchdowns, including the go-ahead 45-yard run with 3:41 left, as the Falcons held off the Rams to clinch the No. 5 seed in the NFC.

The Falcons improved to 11-5, completing their improbable run to the playoffs after a 4-12 finish in 2007. They will travel to NFC West champion Arizona for a wild-card game next weekend.

Eagles 44, Cowboys 6

At Philadelphia, the Eagles overcame daunting odds to capture an NFC wild-card spot with a dominating victory over Dallas.

In a game that became do-or-die for both teams shortly before kickoff when Tampa Bay and Chicago lost, the Eagles (9-6-1) thoroughly outplayed the error-prone Cowboys (9-7). Donovan McNabb threw two touchdown passes and ran for another, and Brian Dawkins forced two fumbles that were returned for scores.

Ravens 27, Jaguars 7

At Baltimore, Le'Ron McClain ran for two touchdowns in the pivotal first half as Baltimore routed Jacksonville.

It was 24-7 at halftime, and Baltimore (11-5) never let up against the stumbling Jaguars (5-11), who committed four turnovers and were held scoreless over the final 45 minutes. The seven points were a season low for Jacksonville.

Texans 31, Bears 24

At Houston, Andre Johnson had two touchdowns for the Texans, who finished 8-8 for the second straight year.

The Bears (9-7) needed a win to keep any postseason hopes alive. The Vikings beat the Giants to take the NFC North title, but Chicago could have gotten in with a wild-card spot by winning and getting help. They blew a 10-0 lead.

Raiders 31, Buccaneers 24

At Tampa, Florida, Oakland third-stringer Michael Bush rushed for a career-high 177 yards and scored on a 67-yard

fourth-quarter jaunt that helped the Raiders rally to end the Buccaneers' season.

Even with a win, the Bucs (9-7) would have needed help to make the playoffs and avoid one of the biggest collapses in franchise history. They were 9-3 and tied for first heading into December but finished with four consecutive losses, two at home after going 6-0 at Raymond James Stadium.

Patriots 13, Bills 0

At Orchard Park, New York, LaMont Jordan scored on a 2-yard run set up by Matt Cassel's 12-yard completion into the wind on fourth down, and Stephen Gostkowski hit a pair of field goals.

Then came the hard part for the Patriots (11-5), who had to wait to find out they didn't make the playoffs when Miami and Baltimore both won.

The Bills managed 276 yards offense but squandered several scoring chances, and wrapped up a season at 7-9 for the third straight year under Dick Jauron.

Steelers 31, Browns 0

At Pittsburgh, Ben Roethlisberger gave the playoff-bound Steelers a major scare by sustaining a concussion during an essentially meaningless victory over the embarrassed Browns that likely was Romeo Crennel's last as Cleveland's coach.

Roethlisberger, expected to play a half to stay sharp before a two-week break, lay on the turf for nearly 15 minutes after being leveled by Willie McGinest and D'Qwell Jackson while delivering a pass late in the second quarter.

Colts 23, Titans 0

At Indianapolis, Peyton Manning hit 4,000 yards for a ninth straight season, three more than Dan Marino's previous NFL mark, as Indianapolis yanked its starters early and still managed to win its ninth straight, beating AFC South champion Tennessee.

It marked the sixth straight season Indy has won at least 12 games, and that wasn't the only big achievement for the Colts.

Indianapolis' Marvin Harrison moved into second place on the all-time receptions list, and Dallas Clark broke John Mackey's single-season franchise record for most yards receiving by a tight end, a mark that had stood since 1966.

Bengals 16, Chiefs 6

At Cincinnati, Cedric Benson ran for 111 yards and a touchdown, putting a little bite into the Bengals' depleted offense, and Cincinnati completed its late-season surge.

The Bengals (4-11-1) will most likely stay the course after their latest losing season. Coach Marvin Lewis has two years left on his contract, and there is no general manager to replace—owner Mike Brown makes the important decisions.

Cavaliers cool off Heat, 93-86



CLEVELAND (AP)—Not even Dwyane Wade can humble the Cavaliers at home.

LeBron James scored 33 points—four more than good buddy Wade, the NBA's leading scorer—and Cleveland remained the league's only unbeaten team on its own floor with a 93-86 win over the Miami Heat on Sunday night.

For the second straight game, the Cavaliers had to come back late at Quicken Loans Arena to extend their home winning streak, which is now at 16 straight. Cleveland was down by nine points going into the fourth and trailed by eight before going on an 18-2 run and outscoring Miami 26-11 over the final eight minutes.

Mo Williams scored 20 before fouling out and Ben Wallace had 14 rebounds for the Cavs (26-4), who won their sixth straight.

The Heat had their winning streak stopped at four.

Miami rookie Michael Beasley's uncontested jumper put Miami up 75-67 with 8:09 left and the Cavs' home streak, salvaged on Christmas when they scored 11 unanswered points in the final two minutes to beat the Washington Wizards, was again in trouble.

But James banked in a tough floater and Delonte West made a 3-pointer in a 10-2 spurt that tied it 77-all with six minutes left.

Cleveland clamped down on defense—Miami scored only 19 in the fourth—made most of its free throws and was fortunate that a couple of 3-pointers hoisted by the Heat in the final minutes were off the mark.

After the final horn, James and Wade, who won an Olympic gold medal together this summer for the U.S. Redeem Team in China, embraced before walking off the floor. They'll meet again on Tuesday—James' 24th birthday—in Miami.

Pulling up for jumpers at every opportunity, Wade scored 14 points on 6-of-7 shooting in the third and the Heat outscored the sluggish Cavs 25-14 in the period to open a 67-58 lead going into the fourth.

But Wade couldn't keep it going as the Cavs focused their defensive effort on slowing the superstar, who came in averaging 28.9 points per game.

Perhaps trying to show Wade he won't give up his NBA scoring crown without a fight, James made two 3-pointers and scored 20 on 8-of-12 shooting in the first half.

But while James' shots were drop-



Cleveland Cavaliers' LeBron James pulls down a rebound against Miami Heat's Dwyane Wade (3) who gets hit by Cavaliers' Anderson Varejao, of Brazil, during the fourth quarter of an NBA basketball game Sunday, Dec. 28, 2008, in Cleveland.

ping, his teammates went a combined 8-of-27 and fell back into a bad old habit of standing around, watching and waiting for James to do his thing. The Cavs played lethargically at both ends and had to be thankful Wade wasn't making shots.

James had four field goals in the first quarter, none prettier than a gravity-defying reverse layup on which he somehow spun the ball into the basket from an impossible angle. Driving down the left side, James went up and underneath the backboard and over to the right side, where he sent the ball backhanded high off the glass and in while being fouled.

Celtics 108, Kings 63

At Sacramento, California, Kevin Garnett had 21 points and 11 rebounds and Boston rebounded from back-to-back losses in emphatic fashion, beating Sacramento in one of the most one-sided wins in franchise history.

The 45-point margin of victory matched the sixth biggest ever by the Celtics, who also beat the New York Knicks by that amount last season.

The Celtics started this four-game road trip with a franchise-record 19-game winning streak, but the defending NBA champions lost a Christmas Day showdown against Los Angeles Lakers and then again the following night at Golden State.

The Kings lost their sixth straight game since winning their first under interim coach Kenny Natt and have dropped 16 of 18 overall.

Lakers 130, Warriors 113

At Los Angeles, Kobe Bryant scored 31 points, Derek Fisher added 19 and the Los Angeles Lakers rolled to a victory over Golden State.

The Lakers, who hadn't played since a win over Boston on Thursday, breezed to a relatively easy victory over the Warriors, who have won just twice in 19 games against them at Staples Center.

Sasha Vujacic had 17 points, Pau Gasol had 13 points, nine rebounds and seven assists, and Andrew Bynum chipped in with 13 points and 10 rebounds.

Jamal Crawford returned to the Warriors' lineup after missing two games with a groin strain and scored 22 points.

Nuggets 117, Knicks 110

At New York, Carmelo Anthony scored 32 points after missing three games with a bruised right elbow to lead Denver over the defenseless New York.

The Nuggets blew the double-digit lead they seized by making 15 of 20 shots in the second quarter, but recovered behind Anthony's flawless

Report: Mixed results from NBA player charities

SALT LAKE CITY (AP)—NBA players who set up charitable foundations don't always contribute as much as expected because of poor management and the high cost of fundraisers.

The analysis was made by *The Salt Lake Tribune*, which studied tax records filed by NBA player charities. It analyzed 89 stand-alone NBA player charities and published the results in a series of stories Sunday.

Together, the charities reported revenue of at least \$31 million between 2005 and 2007. But only about 44 cents of every dollar raised—or just \$14 million—actually reached needy causes, far below the 65 cents most philanthropic groups view as acceptable. The newspaper found that many organizations were left in the inexperienced hands of a friend or relative.

About a dozen of the NBA's biggest names—Yao Ming of the Houston Rockets and the Utah Jazz's Carlos Boozer among them—have foundations run by the Giving Back Fund, according to the Tribune. Giving Back had \$1.1 million in revenue in 2007 and gave \$824,092 to charitable causes.

The NBA has tried to maintain a database on player foundations, but with limited success, senior vice president Kathy Behrens told the Tribune.

Foundations allow players a chance to give back. The charities can also be a nice tax break and a good public relations move, but experts say for most players it's a genuine philanthropic effort. That message doesn't always get through as events are hyped with superstar names, which don't necessarily make fundraising a cinch.

"You're always having to give credibility and justify, when it's a sports celebrity, because people are skeptical," said Susan Johnson, director of former NBA star Dikembe Mutombo's foundation.

Mutombo's foundation is one of

several with an annual budget of \$1 million or more. Reaching that level can take years as the foundations slowly build on public donations. About a third of NBA player charities analyzed by The Tribune remain funded by the athletes' own wealth and many close for lack of support or because athletes move on.

The newspaper also found that few of the players' charities hire full-time management and often place relatives, friends and former sports associates on their boards. As much as the players mean to lend their names to a good cause, sometimes the lavish fundraising galas can cost more than they make.

Players have alternatives to setting up foundations. They can donate to existing charities or work through NBA team foundations, which distribute money to various charities. Players often choose to entrust foundation operations to professionals who manage charities full-time.

Jazz point guard Deron Williams said it's sometimes difficult to decide how to distribute the money because there is so much need. Williams' Point of Hope Foundation donated \$28,500 to a school for autistic children, money raised from Williams' annual summer golf tournament.

"Maybe in the future, we'll narrow it down to one thing, but right now, I just think there's so many areas that need to be touched that you just spread the love," he told the newspaper.

The NBA and the NBA Players Association discuss foundations during rookie orientation, hoping to let the young players know there is more to effective charity work than lending their name or writing a check.

"It's a lot to take on and we really encourage the guys to just do it intelligently," Behrens said. "It's like starting your own business and sometimes people forget that."

fourth and sent the Knicks to their sixth straight loss.

J.R. Smith added 16 points and Chauncey Billups 14 for the Nuggets, who shot 57 percent from the field in the opener of a four-game road trip.

Nate Robinson scored 20 points and David Lee had 19 for the Knicks, who have yielded an average of 115.5 points during their skid. They came in allowing teams to shoot 48.3 percent, highest in the NBA.

It was only the third 30-point game this season for Anthony, who has been bothered by the elbow since he was originally hurt in a victory over Houston on Nov. 30.

Mavericks 98, Clippers 76

At Los Angeles, Josh Howard had 29 points, nine rebounds and a career-best seven assists to lead Dallas over Los Angeles while Mavericks leading scorer Dirk Nowitzki served a one-game suspension.

The ban was announced by the NBA about 3 hours before the game. Nowitzki received a flagrant-2 foul and an automatic ejection in the fourth quarter of Friday night's 97-88 loss at Utah. He took a backward swing at Matt Harpring with a closed fist and hit him in the face, after he and the Jazz forward

got tangled up under the basket.

The Clippers were in even worse shape. Zach Randolph, who bruised his left knee during last Monday's loss to Toronto, wasn't able to play, along with center Chris Kaman (left arch), reserve guard Ricky Davis (left knee) and rookie guard Mike Taylor (broken right thumb).

Marcus Camby returned to the Clippers' lineup after missing the previous game due to his father's death and had 16 points and 12 rebounds. Al Thornton also had 16 points.

Hornets 105, Pacers 103

At Indianapolis, Chris Paul scored 11 points in the final 3:36 and David West made a 17-foot fadeaway jump shot with 2.5 seconds remaining to help New Orleans rally for a victory.

Paul and James Posey scored 19 points each for the Hornets (18-9). West added 18 points, Rasual Butler scored 15 and Peja Stojakovic had 12.

Danny Granger led Indiana (10-20) with 34 points. Roy Hibbert scored 19 before drawing his fifth foul with 6:46 to play in the third quarter. He did not return.

Troy Murphy scored 16 points and grabbed 16 rebounds for the Pacers, who lost their third straight game, all after having the lead.

Reds fill hole in center field with Willy Taveras



CINCINNATI (AP)—Willy Taveras and the Cincinnati Reds

have agreed to a two-year contract, filling the team's need for a center fielder and leadoff hitter.

The speedy Taveras is coming off a disappointing season with Colorado. He batted .251 with a paltry .308 on-base percentage, though he did lead the major leagues with 68 stolen bases.

Reds general manager Walt Jocketty announced the move Saturday.

Taveras, who turned 27 on Christmas, became a free agent when the Rockies decided not to offer him a contract by the Dec. 12 deadline. He spent two injury-plagued seasons in Colorado after he was acquired from Houston in December 2006.

Taveras has a .283 career batting average with seven homers, 109 RBIs and 169 stolen bases.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Bing Energy Drink Prince/Princess of the Lanes Raphael Zapanta is flanked by Leanne Yarobwemal, left, and Marion McKenzie.

Ninth monthly plum for Raphael

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER



Raphael Zapanta still had the last laugh in this year's Bing Energy Drink Prince/Princess of the Lanes competitions.

As if his eight monthly awards were not enough, the bowling prodigy added the December plum to his collection outclassing six other participants in Saturday's roll-offs at the Capital Bowling Center in Garapan.

The December win allowed Zapanta to rule the monthly roll-offs for three straight months. His longest winning streak in the Prince/Princess of the

Lanes competitions this season was four topping the same event in May, June, July, and August. The Saipan Southern High School student also ruled the February and March editions of the roll-offs for an unprecedented 9-for-12 performance in a season.

The weekend tournament was among the closest wins for Zapanta, who prevailed by only three pinfalls against runner-up Leanne Yarobwemal.

Yarobwemal seemed headed for an upset when she took a 41-pinfall lead against Zapanta after three games, 495-454.

The lady kegler posted the best score in Game 1 with her 169 pinfalls, slowed down a bit in Game 2 (152) before play-

ing her best round in Game 3 (174).

Zapanta recorded only the second-best score in Game 1 (163), was four pinfalls behind Yarobwemal in Game 2 (148), and had his lowest output in Game 3 (143) putting his winning run in danger.

But Zapanta still had weapons left in his arsenal, showing his best form in the last game knocking down 193 pins. He downed 45 pins more than Yarobwemal (148) for a four-point winning margin, 647-643.

Coming in third was Marion McKenzie (534), followed by Nikko Gutierrez (487), Marcel McKenzie (482), Troy Verdager (476), and Toby Verdager (364).

Rollers C played its second game in Pool B and made it to the win column following a victory via forfeit over the Torchbearers.

In the boys' 14-and-under division, the Sixers I topped and G-Stars, 110-25, and Rollers A, 45-43, to take the lead in Pool A.

ChaCha Oceanview Junior High School was the only other team in Pool A to win a game. ChaCha crushed Hilaitai, 70-32.

In Pool B, the Sixers 2 defeated Hopwood Junior High School, 42-32, to share the lead with the Lil' Sonics, who won via forfeit against Rollers B.

LMA was also credited the win after another no-show from Rollers B.

In the girls division, organizers put the 14-and-under and 18-and-under teams in one group with Mar-

ianas High School II and the Mt. Carmel Lady Knights winning their debuts.

MHS II showed no love lost toward sister team MHS I, 66-39, while the Lady Knights slipped past the Kagman Lady Ayuyus, 40-37.

Hopwood and ChaCha are the two other teams entered in the girls division and played their first game yesterday.

Sixteen games were scheduled on Day 2 of the tournament.

Each division will play in a single-round robin with the top two teams advancing to the playoffs.

The championship games in each division are set for Saturday. There will be no consolation matches due to time constraints.

This year's Holiday Hoops drew a record 28 teams.

off the field of play," White said.

The recent inductee to the CNMI Sports Hall of Fame the Commonwealth's all-time winningest pitcher Tony Benavente.

Benavente had a 61-17 record after seeing action in the Saipan Major League for 18 years. He is also the SML's lifetime career leader in strikeouts with 816.

Benavente claimed his first most valuable player award in 1982 after leading the Hafa Adai Express to the league's first championship. He was the MVP, anew in 1986 and Finals MVP in 1993 and 1994. In 1995, he was the MVP of the Mobil Games for leading the CNMI to its first-ever regional baseball championship.

Nominations should be made on or before Jan. 8, 2009.

13 TEAMS

From Page 28

Joining Rollers B in Pool C are the San Antonio Sixers (1-0), Runnin' Rebels (0-1), and the Manta Rays (0-2).

The Sixers won their lone game of the day against the Manta Rays, 88-55, handing Southern two losses.

In Pool A, Rollers A and the Kagman Ayuyus won their debuts with the latter escaping with a 45-43 win over the Junior Sonics. Rollers A prevailed over the Ol' Aces, 57-49.

The defending champion G-Stars and the Sonics are in Pool B and also triumphed in the opening day.

The G-Stars outshone the ACS Torchbearers, 86-38, while the Sonics walloped Rollers C, 86-34.

NMASA

From Page 28

nize those among us who have excelled in sports. As the 'best of the best,' members of the CNMI Sports Hall of Fame serve as examples to all who participate in sports, and as role models to our youth and to those who will come after them," NMASA president Michael A. White said.

"We honor them for their outstanding achievements, not only because they were the greatest of their times, but because their achievements must not be forgotten," he added.

Winners, maximum of three, will be enshrined to the CNMI Sports Hall of

Fame next year during the NMASA Annual Banquet.

Nominees can be athletes, coaches, administrators, or officials who are U.S. citizens or have achieved distinction as a CNMI representative. He/she must also have resided in the Commonwealth for a minimum of 10 years and is in the 35-and-above age group. Coaches and administrators must have been active in their respective sports for 15 years or more.

The NMASA general membership will make selection of inductees.

"It is up to each voter to determine who is or is not worthy of election. I personally look for someone who has brought distinction to his or her sport and honor to the CNMI, both on and

TRIBUNE SPORTS SCORES

NBA STANDINGS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	28	4	.875	—
New Jersey	15	15	.500	12
Philadelphia	12	17	.414	14 1/2
Toronto	12	18	.400	15
New York	11	18	.379	15 1/2

Southeast Division

Orlando	24	6	.800	—
Atlanta	19	10	.655	4 1/2
Miami	16	13	.552	7 1/2
Charlotte	11	20	.355	13 1/2
Washington	5	23	.179	18

Central Division

Cleveland	26	4	.867	—
Detroit	17	11	.607	8
Milwaukee	14	17	.452	12 1/2
Chicago	13	17	.433	13
Indiana	10	20	.333	16

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Southwest Division

San Antonio	20	10	.667	—
New Orleans	18	9	.667	1/2
Houston	20	11	.645	1/2
Dallas	18	12	.600	2
Memphis	10	20	.333	10

Northwest Division

Denver	20	11	.645	—
Portland	19	12	.613	1
Utah	18	14	.563	2 1/2
Minnesota	5	24	.172	14
Oklahoma City	3	28	.097	17

Pacific Division

L.A. Lakers	25	5	.833	—
Phoenix	16	12	.571	8
Golden State	9	23	.281	17
L.A. Clippers	8	21	.276	16 1/2
Sacramento	7	24	.226	18 1/2

Yesterday's Games

Denver 117, New York 110
Dallas 98, L.A. Clippers 76
Cleveland 93, Miami 86
New Orleans 105, Indiana 103
Boston 108, Sacramento 63
L.A. Lakers 130, Golden State 113

NFL STANDINGS

AMERICAN CONFERENCE

East

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
x-Miami	11	5	0	.688	345	317
New England	11	5	0	.688	410	309
N.Y. Jets	9	7	0	.563	405	356
Buffalo	7	9	0	.438	336	342

South

z-Tennessee	13	3	0	.813	375	234
y-Indianapolis	12	4	0	.750	377	298
Houston	8	8	0	.500	366	394
Jacksonville	5	11	0	.313	302	367

North

x-Pittsburgh	12	4	0	.750	347	223
y-Baltimore	11	5	0	.688	385	244
Cincinnati	4	11	1	.281	204	364
Cleveland	4	12	0	.250	232	350

West

x-San Diego	8	8	0	.500	439	347
Denver	8	8	0	.500	370	448
Oakland	5	11	0	.313	263	388
Kansas City	2	14	0	.125	291	440

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

East

z-N.Y. Giants	12	4	0	.750	427	294
y-Philadelphia	9	6	1	.594	416	289
Dallas	9	7	0	.563	362	365
Washington	8	8	0	.500	265	296

South

x-Carolina	12	4	0	.750	414	329
y-Atlanta	11	5	0	.688	391	325
Tampa Bay	9	7	0	.563	361	323
New Orleans	8	8	0	.500	463	393

North

x-Minnesota	10	6	0	.625	379	333
Chicago	9	7	0	.563	375	350
Green Bay	6	10	0	.375	419	380
Detroit	0	16	0	.000	268	517

West

x-Arizona	9	7	0	.563	427	426
San Francisco	7	9	0	.438	339	381
Seattle	4	12	0	.250	294	392
St. Louis	2	14	0	.125	232	465

x-clinched division

y-clinched playoff spot
z-clinched conference

Yesterday's Games

Atlanta 31, St. Louis 27
Houston 31, Chicago 24
Green Bay 31, Detroit 21
Minnesota 20, N.Y. Giants 19
Carolina 33, New Orleans 31
Pittsburgh 31, Cleveland 0
New England 13, Buffalo 0
Oakland 31, Tampa Bay 24
Indianapolis 23, Tennessee 0
Cincinnati 16, Kansas City 6
Miami 24, N.Y. Jets 17
Philadelphia 44, Dallas 6
Baltimore 27, Jacksonville 7
Arizona 34, Seattle 21
San Francisco 27, Washington 24
San Diego 52, Denver 21

By The Associated Press

TSUNAMI

From Page 28

dent also competed in the 100m breaststroke and finished the race in 1:16.07 to break Wong's record of 1:16.48 (Feb. 17, 2006).

Shin Kimura set a new mark in the 15-16 age group's 800m freestyle when he clocked 9:46.04. The Grace Christian Academy student broke Robert Jordan's 9:54.61 mark in Jan. 27, 1996.

Joining Staal, Wong, and Shin in Guam were Kensuke Kimura and Marystar Welch.

On top of Tsunami Saipan swim-

mers' record-breaking performances in Guam, coach Hiro Kimura's tankers also hauled 33 medals.

Wong accounted for four gold medals, three silver, and one bronze, while Kenzuke also took home four gold medals, one silver, and three bronze.

Shin and Staal had two gold medals apiece with the former adding three bronze to his collection. Staal claimed five silver and one bronze medals, while Welch brought home three silver and one bronze.

The quartet of Wong, Shin, Kensuke, and Staal finished second in the 200m freestyle relay and third in the 200m medley relay.

Williams blasted 200 pins in her first game, then rolled 193, 153, and 176 in the last three.

Vales, meanwhile, put together games of 163, 177, 160, and 189 to come away with a 689 total and 172.25 average.

Lala Taitano came in third with her 677 total and 169.25 average—built around a four-games series of 180, 167, 191, and 139.

Williams earned \$60 for her victory, while Vales and Taitano took home \$30 and \$20, respectively.

The December King and Queen of the Lanes drew a total of 41 entries—24 men and 17 women. It was organized by the Saipan Bowling Association and sponsored by MARPAC.

SIMON

From Page 28

182, and 223, for 205.5 average.

Jorge Soledad was a mere two pins shy of Robles' output with his 820 total and 205 average. He rolled a four-game series of 240, 201, 211, and 168.

Manacop, Robles, and Soledad pocketed \$100, \$50, and \$30 for their efforts.

Williams, meanwhile, won her third straight Queen of the Lanes following victories in the October and November editions of the competition.

The veteran kegler withstood a challenge from a vacationing Jerrie Vales after scoring a pinfall total of 722, which allowed her to average 180.5.

2008 Christmas Island Relay

Photos by
ROSELYN B. MONROYO



Ronald Villafria passes Palms Resort Hotel.



Participants and volunteers for the 2008 Christmas Island Relay pose for a group photo at the Last Command Post in Marpi Saturday.



Wolf Mojica, left, tags Team Rojo teammate Stan Good.



Members of the Zoo Crew smile as they reach the finish line.



Team Rule Five joins the race in honor of the late Staff Sgt. Julian Manglona.



Fred Camacho, left, and Lewie Tenorio in a down-to-the-wire finish.



The Colts near the finish line.



Code Blue still finished the race in fourth place despite having only four runners.



Cole Chambers cruises along Beach Road.



The Saipan Cyclers celebrate their runner-up finish.



Third placer Team Docomo.



Oh, my! Lions set record for futility at 0-16

The silence in the Detroit Lions' locker room was so deafening it drowned out all but the most mundane of sounds. **24**

Saipan Tribune Sports

Cavaliers cool off Heat, 93-86

Not even Dwyane Wade can humble the Cavaliers at home. **25**



28 TUESDAY, DECEMBER 30, 2008

SAIPAN TRIBUNE

Tsunami Saipan swimmers shatter 11 records

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Tsunami Swimming Center Saipan swimmers erased 11 CNMI records in the Guam International Swim Meet held over the weekend.

Leading Tsunami Saipan's record plunge into the waters of the Hagatna Swimming Pool was Rezne Wong, who smashed six records.

The Marianas High School student timed in at 33.18 seconds in the 50m breaststroke to break the boys' 17-18 age group record of 33.35, which he himself posted in October this year



during the Tsunami Saipan-Saipan Swim Club dual meet.

In the 100m breaststroke race, the 18-year-old Wong clocked in at 1:10.21 passing his 1:10.62 mark in the same age group in November this year.

The 17-18 age group record in the 200m breaststroke also fell with Wong finishing the race in 2:30.54, shattering Justin Pierce's 2:30.56 mark on June 5, 1999.

Rezne's time in the three breaststroke swims are also new CNMI National records.

Kai Staal returned to Saipan with four new records in the boys' 13-14 age group to his credit.

Less than two months after posting a record in the



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

From left, Tsunami Saipan's Kai Staal, Rezne Wong, and Shin Kimura pose for a group photo during a break in the 2008 Guam International Swim Meet in Guam.

200m freestyle (2:07.16), Staal crushed his own mark, timing in at 2:07.15 in Guam.

Staal's second record-breaking swim came in the 400m freestyle. Curiously, this event was not among Staal's strong points,

but still he timed in at 4:34.13, which was enough to break the 13-year mark of Joshua Taitano. Taitano's record, set in Aug. 17, 2005, was 4:35.57.

Staal smashed his own record (35.97) in the 50m breast-

stroke, when he swam the same event in Guam in 35.33.

The Saipan International School student

See **TSUNAMI** on Page 26

13 teams unbeaten in Holiday Hoops

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER



Rollers B and Sixers I swept their opening day assignments, while 11 other squads also triumphed in the 2008 Annual Christmas Basketball Jam Festival Saturday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

Rollers B went 2-0 on Day 1 of the annual caging to top Pool C of the boys' 18-and-under division. The Sixers I had a 2-0 record in the boys' 14-and-under age group to pace Pool A.

The Joe Diaz- and Paul Camacho-mentored Rollers B debuted with a close 55-52 victory over Saipan Southern High School and made it back-to-back wins following a 71-44 demolition of the Runnin' Rebels.

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Kagma Ayuyus' Juan Maratita, right, drives to the baseline against Rollers B's Manny Matagolai during their game in the boys' 18-and-under division of the Holiday Hoops yesterday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

December King of the Lanes Simon Manacop is flanked by runners-up Dannie Robles, left, and Jorge Soledad.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

December Queen of the Lanes Emi Williams is flanked by runners-up Lala Taitano, left, and Jerrie Vales.

Simon, Emi win last roll-off of 2008

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Simon Manacop and Emi Williams finished the year with a bang after winning the December Budweiser King and Queen of the Lanes

Tenpin Bowling Tournament last Sunday at the Capital Bowling Center in Garapan.

Manacop won his fifth monthly competition of 2008 following four 200-plus rolls last Saturday.

The Department of Public Safety officer started off on the right foot, tattooing 203 pin-

RELATED NEWS

Ninth monthly plum for Raphael **Page 26**

falls in Game 1. He followed that up with 212 and 221 in the middle games before capping his impressive run with a 225 to finish with a four-game total

of 861—good for a 215.25 pin-fall average.

The former youth bowler also took the men's plum in March, June, September, and October.

Perfect gamer Dannie Robles came in second after coming up with a four-game series of 822, built around rolls of 170, 247,

See **SIMON** on Page 26

NMASA still waiting for Hall of Fame nominations

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER



The Northern Marianas Amateur Sports Association is calling on various sports federations to submit their nominations for the CNMI Sports Hall of Fame.

Nominations should be put in writing with the list of achievements the nominees have accomplished in the sports community and other valuable information.

"It's important for the CNMI sporting community to recog-

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